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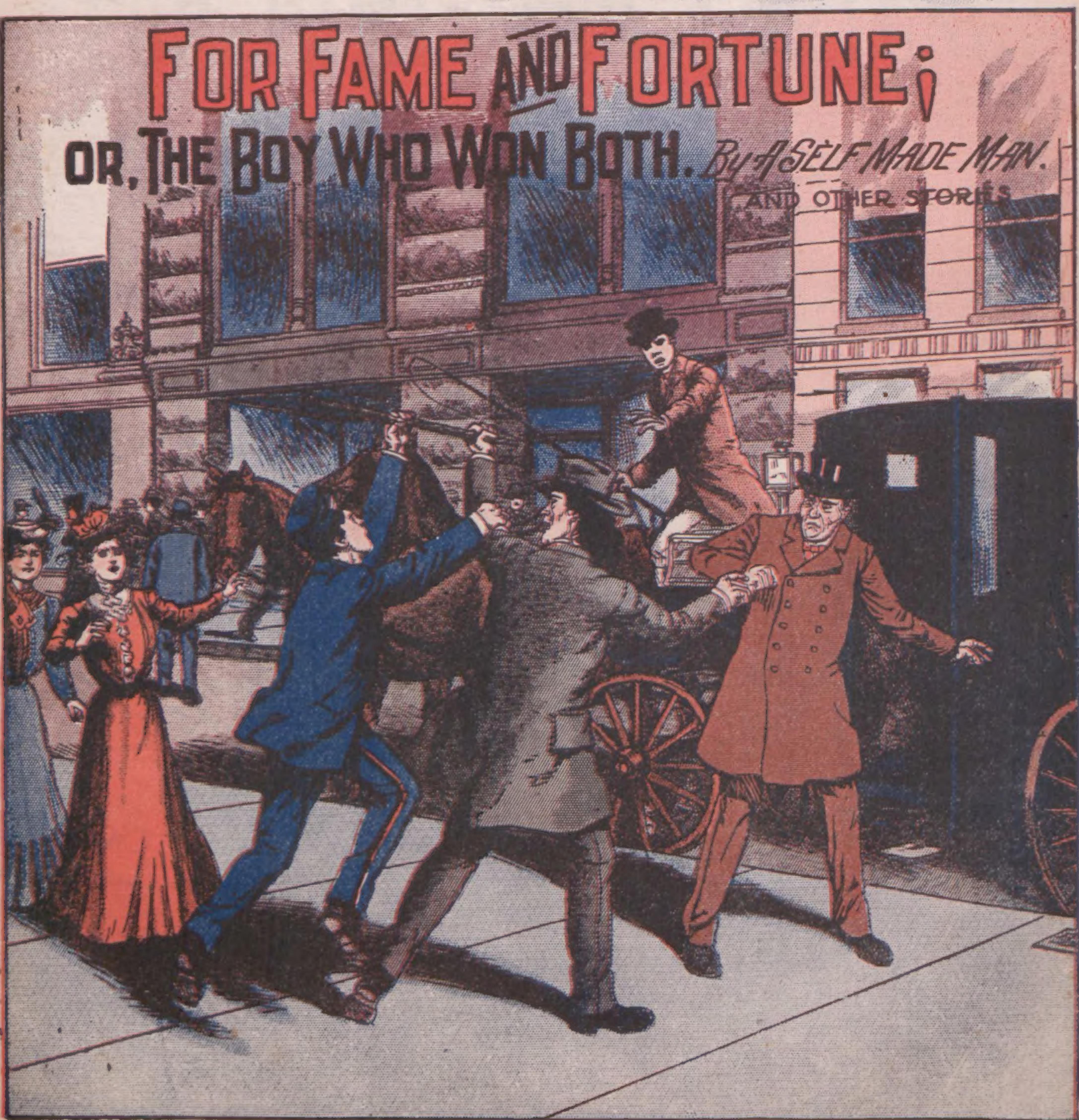
FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF
BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.

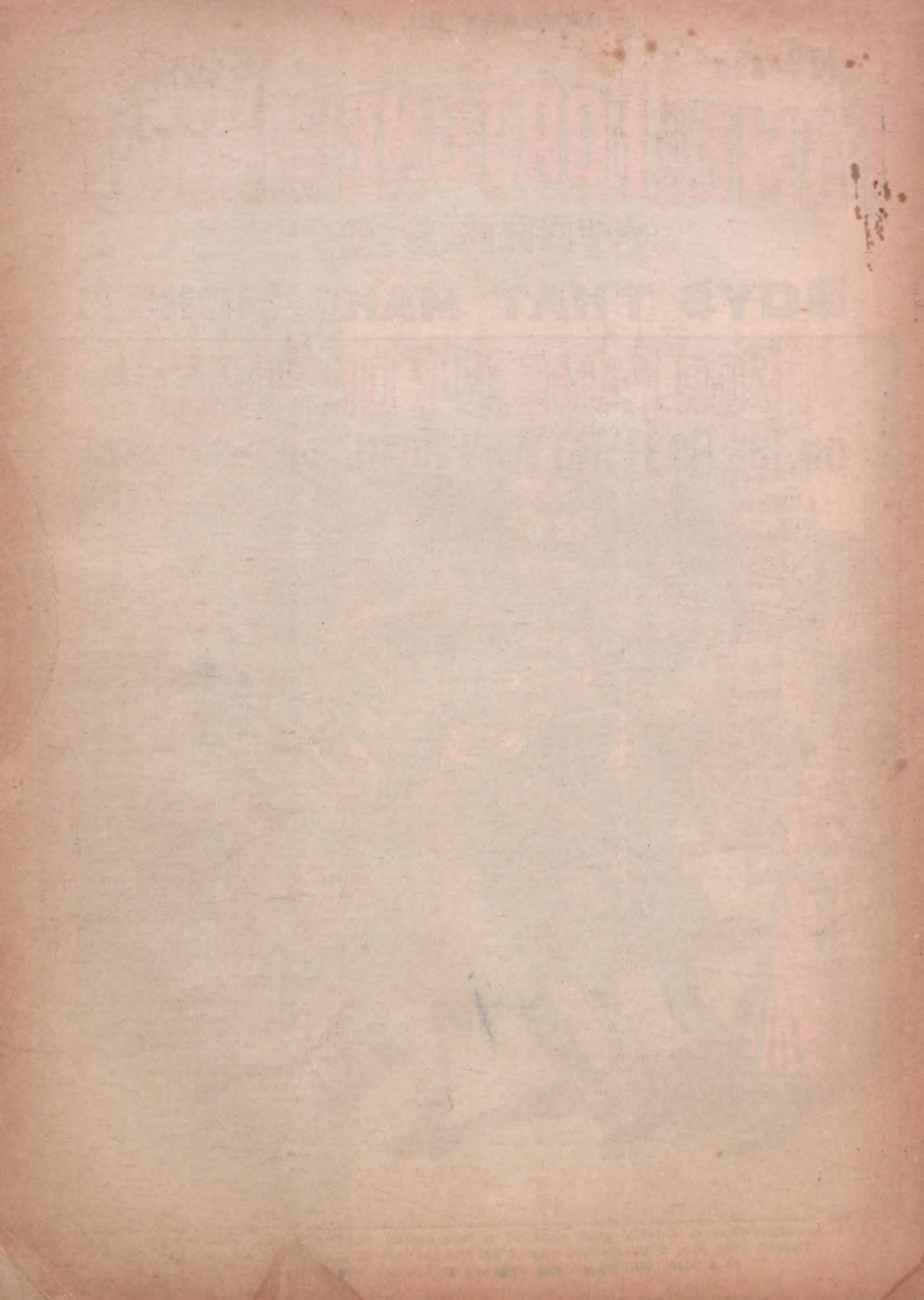
FOR FAME AND FORTUNE;

OR, THE BOY WHO WON BOTH. *By A SELF MADE MAN.*

AND OTHER STORIES



As a smoothly-shaven, elderly man alighted, a long-haired, shabby-looking individual suddenly rushed upon him with uplifted cane from the shadow of a nearby doorway. Quick as a wink Stanley sprang forward and seized both cane and arm.



Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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FOR FAME AND FORTUNE

— OR —

THE BOY WHO WON BOTH

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I

STANLEY HOPE, MESSENGER.

Six alert-looking lads, from fourteen to eighteen years of age, sat on a long bench against the wall of an American District Telegraph Company's branch office on Twenty-third street, New York, one bright day early in the spring.

They were all attired in the regulation uniform so familiar to the general public since the establishment of this branch of the messenger service.

Each boy had a number on his cap, and by that number was he addressed by the manager of the office during business hours whenever his services were called into requisition.

They were a cheerful lot, those particular six boys, and they seemed to enjoy their strenuous calling.

At any rate, they were quick on their feet, and were so bright and clever that they never—or, at least, very seldom—made a mistake in delivering a message, a package, a bouquet, or anything, in fact, intrusted to them.

The manager of the office took a good deal of pride in those six boys.

He often said that there were not six boys like them in any other office of the A. D. T. service.

He had money to bet on it.

This was equivalent to a challenge to the manager of any other office in the city having six or more boys under his authority to produce six of his force who could outshine the six lads of the Twenty-third street branch.

The challenge was not accepted, although every manager of every office knew about the matter.

The manager of the Twenty-third street branch went even further in his boasting.

Not only had he a bunch of crack messengers who could not be outdone by any similar six in the service, but he said he had one boy whose match was not to be found in the city.

That was a pretty broad assertion.

The messenger in question was No. 44.

His name was Stanley Hope.

It was an attractive name, and the boy was just as attractive as his name.

He was a handsome, curly-headed youth of eighteen, the oldest of the bunch of six who on this particular morning ornamented the bench in the office while awaiting a call.

He had dark, flashing eyes, a Grecian nose, and a firm, well-built chin.

Energy, resolution and ambition showed in every line of his countenance.

He was the popular leader among the six, and what any one

of the others would not do for him if called upon was not worth mentioning.

Stanley Hope had the reputation of being the most gentlemanly boy in the service.

Consequently he was a great favorite with the ladies who had frequent occasions for the services of the Twenty-third street branch office.

He lived somewhere on the East Side, in a small and modest flat, with his widowed mother and crippled sister, two years younger than himself.

Anybody who knew the Hopes could easily believe that they had seen better days.

There was an indefinable air of refinement about the little widow and her son and daughter that the direst poverty could not wipe out.

It was the mark of gentle birth.

Some people, when luck has driven them to the wall, are forever apologizing for their situation in life.

They try to make you understand that they are not accustomed to their present situation.

That once upon a time they were ever so much better off.

The Hopes never made such bids for sympathy.

If their path in life had once been among roses they never alluded to the fact.

On the day in question Stanley Hope sat in his accustomed seat at the head of the bench, and his five associates filled the balance of the space.

"Say, fellows," spoke up Dick Diamond, "when did this happen before?"

"When did what happen before?" inquired Bob Blodgett, looking at the other.

"That we six were all together on this bench at this hour of the day. What's going to happen, anyway?"

"What should happen, except that one of us will get a call in a moment, and then there'll only be five left," said Bob, with a grin.

"Six little messengers very much alive, one got a call and then there were five," chirped Willie Walker, the youngest of the bunch, and who therefore occupied the tail-end seat.

"You can't swear that you won't be the one called, Willie," said Joe Judson; "not while any of us remain."

"Is that so? Don't you flatter yourself that you stand any more chance than me. I can cover as much ground as you with my eyes shut."

"You think you can, Willie," replied Judson; "but you've another think coming."

"I'll bet you a nickel I get a call before you," asserted Walker, aggressively.

"Where's your nickel?"

"Here it is," responded Willie, fishing it out of his pocket. "Is that the last tip you got?" asked Judson, jeeringly. "No, it isn't the last tip I got, smarty. I'll bet I get more tips than you do."

"One bet at a time, Willie. Here's a nickel to match yours that I get a call before you," said Judson.

"I'll be the stakeholder," volunteered Sam Sprague, holding out his hand.

"Nixy," objected Judson. "I'll hold the stakes myself, because I'm going to win."

"You'll hold nothing," said Walker. "Let Sam hold the nickels."

While Willie and Joe were bickering over their bet at the end of the bench, Stanley Hope sat silent and abstracted at the head of it, with a far-away look in his fine eyes.

"What are you thinking about, Stanley?" asked Dick Diamond.

"I'm thinking about my play," replied Hope, without changing his position.

"Your what?" exclaimed Dick, not grasping the idea at once.

"My play."

"Your play?" said Dick, in a perplexed tone. "What do you mean by that?"

"Didn't I tell you that I had written a drama?"

"Written a drama! The dickens you have! Not a regular drama such as they put on at the theaters?"

"Yes, a regular drama."

"Gee whiz! Did you hear that, Sam?" nudging his neighbor.

"Hear what?" asked Sam, who had been listening to the altercation between Joe and Willie, who were always scrapping in their way.

"Stanley says he's written a play—a real drama for the theater. What do you think of that?"

Sam was interested at once.

"What is it like, Stanley? Tell us about it, will you?" he said.

Buzz-z!

That was an outside call for a messenger.

The manager glanced at the indicator and saw that the call was from the Criterion apartment house—a swell place in the vicinity, where two, three and four rooms, without kitchens, were rented at a high figure to those who could afford the luxury.

"Forty-four!" he called out.

Stanley sprang up and was at the railing in a moment.

The manager handed him a ticket with the address of the caller on it, and the boy hurried out at the door.

He turned down Fifth avenue, walked a block or two, and then took to a cross street.

A few hundred feet west of the avenue he came to a tall, narrow building, with a white marble front and an imposing hallway entrance.

On either side of the doorway was a metallic shield of quaint design, on which in raised letters was the word "Criterion."

An iron grill-work door apparently barred admission.

It was not locked, however, and Stanley was too familiar with this kind of a door to lose any time over it.

He turned the handle and entered the long corridor.

A colored boy who was seated before a telephone switchboard directed the young messenger to the elevator and said: "Seventh floor, front, east."

A moment or two later Stanley was dropped out on the seventh-floor corridor.

The elevator boy pointed out a certain door, and the messenger glided over to it and pushed the electric button.

A prim-looking colored maid admitted him to the inner hall, led him into a small reception-room, and then disappeared.

In a few minutes a stunning-looking lady, attired in an expensive tea gown, swept into the room with a letter in her hand.

This was Mrs. Jack Howard, an actress professionally known as Adele Temple, who was leading woman at one of the big theaters.

Her husband was a well-known Wall Street man.

She smiled at the handsome young messenger, who stood, cap in hand, awaiting her pleasure.

"Take this note to Mr. John Bloodgood's office in the Empire Theater Building. There is no answer."

"Very well, ma'am," replied Stanley, politely.

With the envelope the lady handed Hope a dollar bill and a quarter additional.

The bill was supposed to cover the service, while the quarter was a tip.

Stanley, however, expected to make something out of the dollar bill as well, for when the time was reckoned up after he returned to the office, the change, if any, was always handed over to the messenger.

This was a premium for extra quick delivery of letters, packages, etc., which spurred the lads on to save time.

Stanley lost no time in reaching the street, and he hustled up to Fifth avenue, thence up to Twenty-third street, past the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and so on up Broadway in the direction of the Empire Theater Building, boarding a car at the corner of Twenty-fourth street.

He left the car half-way between Twenty-ninth street and Fortieth, and started up the sidewalk.

As he approached the entrance to the offices in the Empire Theater Building a cab drew up beside the curb.

As a smoothly shaven, elderly man alighted, a long-haired, shabby-looking individual rushed upon him with uplifted cane from the shadows of a nearby doorway.

Quick as a wink Stanley sprang forward and seized both cane and arm.

CHAPTER II.

STANLEY IS OFFERED A NEW POSITION.

The seedy-looking man turned fiercely upon the young messenger and tried to free his arm.

"How dare you lay your hands on me, varlet!" he exclaimed in a tragic tone that savored something of the stage. "Desist, or I will strike you to the earth."

"I don't think you will," replied Stanley, coolly. "You were going to hit that gentleman with your cane."

"What do you mean, Torrens?" demanded the voice of the gentleman who had come in the cab, and who, but for the boy's timely intervention, must have been knocked to the sidewalk. "Are you mad, sir, that you make this attack on me?"

"Mad!" repeated Torrens, who was undoubtedly an actor, and apparently one of the old school. "Doubtless I am, John Bloodgood. And who has made me so but you? You, sir—the vampire who has fed yourself on my talent and paid me not. Where is the money due me for services rendered and forgotten? Tell me that, you old varlet."

"I owe you nothing, sir," replied Mr. Bloodgood, coldly.

"Nothing! Ha, ha, ha!" with a hollow, sarcastic laugh. "Nothing! Ye gods! will you listen to that? Did you not engage me for the summer season last year to go South and draw the dollars into your cash-box?"

"I did engage you, it is true, on the strength of your past reputation, to play a small part in 'The Prodigal Son,' but you were simply rotten and I had to let you go."

"Me rotten!" roared Torrens, striking an attitude that attracted a crowd. "Me, Talbot Torrens, who has supported Booth, Barrett, MacCullough, and others too numerous to mention? Me—rotten! Shades of William Shakespeare! That I should live to hear this! I throw the lie in your teeth, John Blood—Why, where has he gone?"

Manager Bloodgood had taken advantage of the gathering crowd to grasp his rescuer by the arm and drag him into the vestibule of the Empire Theater Building and into the elevator, which speedily whisked them to the fifth floor.

"I am extremely obliged to you, young man, for your timely interference in my behalf," said Mr. Bloodgood. "Come with me to my office."

"You're quite welcome, sir," replied Stanley. "You are Mr. John Bloodgood, I believe?"

"That's my name."

"I have brought a note for you."

"From whom?" asked the manager, taking it.

"From Mrs. Howard, of the Criterion Apartments."

"Humph!" muttered Mr. Bloodgood. "I wonder what she wants."

Stopping before a door on which was lettered "Office of John Bloodgood's Attractions," then, in much smaller letters, "Old Missouri," "The Golden Calf," "After Dark," Mr. Bloodgood let himself in with a pass-key.

"Come in," he said, drawing the young messenger inside. "This is my New York office. I have three shows on the road, and all reports are sent to me here. I don't travel much myself, as each of my companies has an acting manager, who is responsible for everything. Take a seat. By the way, what is your name?"

"Stanley Hope, sir," replied the messenger, sitting down, though he intended to remain but a minute.

The manager seemed struck by the name.

"Stanley Hope, eh? Quite euphonious. Would make an excellent stage name, upon my word it would. Well, what can I do for you? You've placed me under considerable obligations by saving me from a knock-out at the hands of that miserable hamfatter, Talbot Torrens. I can't let the matter pass without making you some suitable compensation," and the manager's hand sought his pocket.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I can't accept any recompense for what I did. Any one would have acted as I did under the circumstances."

"Maybe they would; but you were the only one at hand, and if you hadn't jumped in and caught that fellow's arm I should have caught a nasty blow. Come, now, let me do something for you. You are a messenger, I see, at a small wage, of course. I like your appearance. I need an assistant in my office to help my stenographer. The young man I had has just left, and I was about to advertise for his successor. How would you like the show business?"

"I think I'd like it very well. I am interested in the theater. I have written a play—"

"You have done what?" asked Mr. Bloodgood, looking hard at the young messenger.

"I have written a play."

"You have, eh?" with a faint smile.

"Yes, sir," his eyes shining eagerly.

"What kind of a play?"

"It's a Western drama, in four acts."

"How old are you, young man?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"Have you ever been behind the scenes?"

"No, sir."

"Then you know nothing about the theater back of the curtain?"

"Only what I have seen from the front."

"And yet you have written a play. Don't you know, young man, that in order to build a house properly a man should be a carpenter?"

"Yes, sir."

"And to put a piece of machinery together in the right way a man has got to be a practical machinist?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, in order to build a play, the writing of which is a secondary consideration, the author requires a certain familiarity at least with the region in which it must be produced."

"I suppose so, sir," answered Stanley, looking somewhat discouraged, for the manager's words had greatly damped his enthusiasm of a moment before.

"However, you needn't feel downcast, young man. You're young yet. If it's in you to write a good play, you'll find the way of doing it. If your bent is in that direction, you can't do better than to come to work for me. In time I may place you with one of my road companies, on the executive staff, and then you'll have the opportunity to use your eyes and wits and learn the inner workings of the theater. What do you say? Will you accept this position in my office? I'll start you at so much per week," and the manager mentioned a sum that was three dollars in excess of what he was now getting, tips excepted.

"I should like to speak to my mother about it, sir, first, if you have no objection."

"None at all. I'll keep the place open for you the rest of the week. Call here some time after twelve not later than Saturday, or you can drop me a letter."

"All right, sir," replied Stanley, rising. "I am very much obliged to you for the offer of the position."

"Don't mention it, young man. The obligation is all on my side. Besides, I've taken a fancy to you. I like your face. I believe you are just the boy I want."

Fifteen minutes later Stanley walked into the A. D. T. office, passed the dollar over to the manager, out of which he got just a nickel, in addition to his car fare, and then took his seat to wait for another call.

Joe Judson and Willie Walker were the only ones left on the bench, and a moment later Willie was called up to take a package uptown, and as he passed out of the door he threw a triumphant grin back at Judson, for he had won the nickel bet.

CHAPTER III

FROM MESSENGER BOY TO MANAGER'S OFFICE.

That evening Stanley had a consultation with his mother about leaving the district messenger service and going to work for John Bloodgood, theatrical manager.

"Mother, I think, if you've no objection, I'd like to make the change. I'm tired of wearing this suit, and of being addressed as 'forty-four.' There's no future in it, not even of being known as the crack messenger of the A. D. T. Company."

"Are you sure that your new position will be steady?" asked his mother anxiously, for her son's wages were a serious consideration with her.

Bessie, her daughter, who was a smart needleworker for her age, helped out a little with feather-stitching on infants' garments; but the work paid poorly, and the most she was able to make when work was plentiful was two dollars a week.

Stanley loved his crippled sister dearly, and it was one of the ambitions of his life to make enough money to place her as well as their little mother on easy street.

"I guess it'll be steady, all right, mother. It's office work, and I like that much better than what I'm doing."

"Well, my son, you must decide that matter for yourself."

"But I want to know if you're willing I should take it," persisted the boy.

"I am willing you should make any change that you think is for the better. You ought to be a better judge as to that than I. You are a sensible boy, and fully realize how we are situated. I know you will do nothing to jeopardize our chances of getting on."

"Very well, mother. I'll write to Mr. Bloodgood, tell him just how I am fixed, and will give him to understand that I will accept the position on the condition that the situation is a steady one."

Dick Diamond, who had a call up in the neighborhood of the Empire Theater on the following morning, delivered the letter for Stanley.

In the afternoon Mr. Bloodgood sent a reply back by a messenger assuring Stanley that the position would be a permanent one, in one capacity or another.

He said he would like to see the boy on the following afternoon at two, if possible, so as to arrange for him to come to work on the following Monday.

Stanley got permission to go off for an hour on the next afternoon, which was Friday, and he hurried up to Mr. Bloodgood's office.

The manager had a talk with him, introduced him to his stenographer, who worked in the reception-room of the suite, and then Stanley returned to the telegraph office to notify the manager, later on, that he was going to leave the district messenger service.

The manager was very sorry to learn of his intention, and offered him another dollar raise if he would remain.

He declined, however, having made his arrangements to the contrary.

Saturday evening, when the six were paid off, Stanley announced to his associates that his career as a messenger was over for good.

"You don't mean that!" gasped Dick Diamond, who was Stanley's particular chum.

"I do, Dick."

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed Bob Blodgett, with a rueful face. "What are we going to do without you?"

"Where are you going to work?" asked Sam Sprague, with a glum look.

"I've got an office position with Theatrical Manager Bloodgood, in the Empire Theater Building."

"That's where I took the letter for you, isn't it?" said Dick.

"That's the place."

"There's a mighty pretty girl in that office," said Dick, with a grin.

"She's the stenographer and general clerk," replied Stanley.

"I wouldn't mind working there myself," continued Diamond. "You don't mind if I drop in and see you, do you?"

"I hope you will, Dick. I don't want to lose you."

"I suppose it doesn't matter about the rest of us, eh?" chipped in Willie Walker. "I thought we were always going to stick together."

"I hope we will, fellows," said Stanley. "Don't be afraid, I'm not going to lose sight of you altogether—not if I can help it."

"You'll get all the passes that you want now to the different theaters, I suppose," said Joe Judson, eagerly. "I hope you won't forget us when you have any to spare. I like to go to the shows better'n anything else."

"I can't say whether I'll get any passes or not," replied Stanley; "but if I get any that I can give away you chaps shall have the first chance."

"That's right. I know you won't forget your five pals," said Bob, with a nod of his head.

"No, boys, I'm not one of the forgetting kind. Shake hands, now. We may be parted, in a way, but we're comrades just the same, aren't we?"

"Sure we are," cried Willie, exuberantly.

And the other four echoed the sentiment.

They shook hands over it, swore eternal friendship, and wished their comrade good luck in his new job.

Then they separated, each going to his own home.

Stanley's office hours in his new place were from 9:30 to 4:30, and he presented himself on time at Mr. Bloodgood's office on Monday morning.

Miss Sanderson, the stenographer, did not arrive until ten that morning, and our hero had to cool his heels in the corridor till she showed up.

"Good-morning, Miss Sanderson," said Stanley, pleasantly.

"Good-morning, Stanley," she said, with a smile, for she had taken an instant liking to the handsome new assistant. "I'm a trifle late, though I don't get here much before ten. You'd better carry the key after this," and she handed it to him as she proceeded to take off her hat and wraps.

"Mr. Bloodgood doesn't get here till about noon, does he?"

"Seldom before two, unless he has an engagement with some one for an earlier hour. Professional people are not early risers, you know. One of our companies is in Harlem this week."

"At what theater?"

"The West End. There's some of the paper on the wall."

Stanley looked in the direction indicated and saw several colored lithographs of "Old Missouri."

Close by were lithos of "The Golden Calf" and "After Dark." There was a stack of small photographs of members of the several companies on a shelf.

There were also quite a number of pictures of prominent actors and actresses hung about on the walls.

Miss Sanderson gave Stanley something to do, and almost before he knew it noon was around, and the stenographer asked him when he wanted to go to lunch.

She said she went out about one, and she thought he'd better go first.

He went over to a cheap quick-lunch place on Sixth avenue, and when he got back the acting manager of "Old Missouri" was waiting to see Mr. Bloodgood.

The manager came in about half-past one, and while he was talking to his representative in the private room, the door opened and Mr. Talbot Torrens poked his head in at the door of the reception-room, and, seeing nobody but Stanley, he stalked in as if he owned the place.

"Is Mr. Bloodgood in?" he asked in a deep, bass voice.

"Yes, sir; but he's engaged at present," replied Stanley.

"Methinks, young man, I have seen you before," he said, with a deep frown, which showed the boy that the actor evidently recognized him as the person who had defeated his attempt to get back at Manager Bloodgood for real or fancied injury.

"I think you have, too," answered Stanley, rather amused at his manner.

He had a better opportunity now to size up Mr. Torrens than on the afternoon he saw him first under rather exciting circumstances.

He noticed that the actor had dark, piercing eyes, with hollows under them; prominent cheek-bones, a beaked nose, and long, wavy hair, upon which perched a shabby Fedora hat of ancient vintage.

Beneath a cheap overcoat could be seen his shiny Prince Albert coat, which was tightly buttoned around his body, and his right hand was thrust through it at the chest.

His legs were encased in trousers very baggy at the knees, and over his patent-leather shoes, which were all seamed and cracked, were spats which had originally been white, but which ravages of time and mud had changed to yellow.

This man in his time had been an actor of fair ability, but was now out of date and gone to seed.

He loved to live over again what he was pleased to call his former triumphs.

He continually asserted that he would have been a great actor but for professional jealousy, which had marred his promising career.

"Are you working for the vampire?" he asked, unconsciously striking an attitude.

"Who do you mean by the vampire?" inquired Stanley.

"Who should I mean but Bloodgood? He, like others of his

ilk, is sucking the blood of the profession. Are you aware, young man, that I once played with Booth?"

"No, sir. He was a fine actor, I have been told."

"Aye, aye, he was passing fair; but there are others—others from whom the demon jealousy plucked the fair flower, reputation, ere it had time to bloom in the sunshine of public approbation. I have consecrated a whole lifetime to the drama. What has it done for me?" gloomily.

As the boy could not answer that question, he wisely remained silent.

Mr. Talbot Torrens appeared to have a grievance against the drama as well as against Manager Bloodgood.

"It has done all sorts of things, not for me, but to me. But to business. As the vampire is not approachable, may I have a word with you, young man?"

"Certainly," replied Stanley, wondering what the actor wanted.

"Come hither. It is best that we be out of earshot of yon door, behind which the vampire sits like some bloated spider waiting for prey."

Stanley was new in the business, or he would not have left his seat to see what mysterious communication Mr. Torrens had to impart to him.

The seedy professional caught the boy by the arm and led him down near the outer door, much after the way in some old-time plays one actor would lead another across the stage to O. P. side in order to communicate some strange secret.

"Young man," he said in a stage whisper, "could I so far impose on your generosity as to negotiate a loan of a quarter? If not a quarter, a dime? Even the donation of the humble nickel will be thankfully appreciated, for it will enable me to purchase a draught of the brew of Gambrinus."

"You mean beer, don't you?" laughed Stanley, handing him a five-cent piece.

At that moment there was a sound at the private door as if some one was about to enter the room.

Mr. Torrens heard it, and nervously grasping the handle of the outer door he faded away into the corridor with remarkable celerity for one of his years, while Stanley returned to his desk to continue his work.

CHAPTER IV.

SAVED AT THE POINT OF DEATH.

The first week passed away quickly and pleasantly enough to Stanley, and he told his mother when he got home on Saturday at an early hour, with his wages in his pocket, that he had never earned money easier in his life.

"I'm bound to say that, so I like the job first rate," he said, with some enthusiasm. "Miss Sanderson and I have things pretty much to ourselves up to noon, when people who have business with Mr. Bloodgood begin to drop in. Quite a number of professionals came in during the week and buzzed Miss Sanderson for passes for the West End, in Harlem, where one of our companies is playing 'Old Missouri' this week. They didn't always get them, just the same, though Miss Sanderson had quite a bunch of them signed in blank by Mr. Bloodgood in her desk to dispose of as her judgment dictated. As she said they had the 'standing room only' sign up nearly every night, she didn't give many away, except to matinees. She gave me a pass for two, but I gave it to Dick Diamond, as I didn't care to go way up to One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, on the West Side, when the show will be at the New Star, on Lexington avenue, next week, which is much handier for me."

On Monday evening Stanley took Bob Blodgett to see "Old Missouri," and they both enjoyed the play very much indeed.

When they came out Stanley was surprised to see Mr. Torrens standing near the entrance with a hungry look in his eyes.

His famished eyes lighted on the two boys, and, recognizing our hero, the professional immediately buttonholed him and tried to lead him aside.

"What is it—another nickel, Mr. Torrens?" he asked, laughingly.

"Nay, young man; I fain wouldst borrow fifteen cents, for I have not broken my fast all day. It is a grievous shame that I, who have played with Booth, should be reduced to such sorry straits as to have to ask for the price. Perhaps the time may come when Talbot Torrens will be able to repay with interest the stipend that nature craves to keep soul and body together."

"Come up with a nickel, Bob," said Stanley. "Here's ten

cents, which is all we can afford, Mr. Torrens. We are not as yet millionaires."

"A thousand thanks, young man," replied the actor, accepting the humble offering. "Perchance I may be able to raise the other nickel from a brother professional. I will hie myself to the stage door and wait for the vampire's hirelings to appear."

"Is that one of your actors, Stanley?" asked Bob, gazing with some interest after the retreating form of the heavy man, for such Stanley had learned was that individual's line of business.

"Oh, no. He's a broken-down professional. Mr. Bloodgood engaged him for a short Southern trip last summer, but had to shake him because he couldn't make good. Since then he has been dunning the boss for ten weeks' salary, but without much success. He calls Mr. Bloodgood a vampire. I feel sorry for him, and would like to help him, for he really is in need, but I can't afford it. My mother needs every cent of my money to run the house."

"If you feel sorry for every actor you run across you'll feel miserable two-thirds of your time," remarked Bob, who knew something about the dark side of the profession.

"Professional or not, I don't like to see a man, or a woman, either, go hungry."

"If you could afford it you'd be an easy mark," laughed his friend. "Every time you left your office you'd find half a dozen actors out of a job waiting for you to give you a touch. I'll bet those two nickels you gave the heavy man will pass over the nearest bar for a couple of beers, and that he will try and fill up at the free lunch table."

"I can't help it," replied Stanley. "He'll get something to eat, at any rate, and he looks as if he needed it."

The two boys hailed a car and were carried downtown.

When Miss Sanderson arrived at the office next morning, Stanley started in to tell her how much he and his friend Bob Blodgett enjoyed the show the night before.

"'Old Missouri' is all right," he said. "The house was packed."

"I am not surprised," replied the young lady. "The company did a record business at the West End last week. There was very little paper in the house, outside of Monday night."

"What do you mean by paper in the house, Miss Sanderson?"

"Free admissions."

"Oh, I see. I'll get used to the technical expressions of the business by and by."

"By the way, Stanley, you'd better take this letter over to the Le Brun Scenic Studio, on West — street. They are building the scenery over there for 'On the Rhine,' the new melodrama Mr. Bloodgood will put on the road next season."

"All right. I'll get over there and back in no time. Don't forget I was an A. D. T. messenger only a little while ago."

"Oh, there's no occasion for hurry. You will probably have to wait for an answer."

Stanley took the letter, put on his hat and started for the west side of the city.

He found the building he was in search of in the storehouse and wharf district.

A big, argus-eyed watchman sat in a chair at the main entrance.

"I want to see Mr. Taylor," said Stanley.

Mr. Taylor was the scenic artist and the superintendent of the studio, and the letter brought by Stanley was addressed to him.

He was the man who planned all the work, made the models and issued the instructions to the various departments, for scene-painting was not the only thing done on the premises.

The costumes of many an elaborate production were made there.

So also were the mechanical devices, properties and wonderful lighting effects.

Looking into a huge, low-ceilinged room, where a dozen or more carpenters were busily at work on the skeleton frames of white pine, preparing them for the set pieces of scenery, the watchman called to a boy and told him to take Stanley up to Mr. Taylor's department.

"Come with me," said the youth, shaking the superfluous shavings from his apron, and he led the way through the carpenter shop out into a kind of long driveway running the entire length of the building.

Above its entrance were suspended the paint frames where the scenery was painted.

Long avenues ran off from the driveway proper, and along them Stanley saw piles of finished scenery stored.

They passed a couple of men, one of whom was working a pump-handle attached to a large barrel resting on a long truck, while the other held the nozzle of a hose in his hand, with which he was spraying a recently painted "set-piece."

"What are they doing that for?" asked Stanley of his conductor.

"They're fireproofing the scenery," replied the boy, carelessly.

From the end of the driveway they entered upon what appeared to Stanley as a fully appointed stage, though it was not elevated like the stage of the ordinary theater.

However, it was every bit as complete in other ways, for it had its full equipment of fly galleries, a loft, and portable switchboard for electric lighting.

After leaving the stage they climbed two flights of stairs up through the fly galleries and into a storeroom, and thence up another flight into the studio, where Mr. Taylor was found.

Stanley delivered the letter to him.

"Mr. Bloodgood sent you, eh?" said the scenic artist.

"I'm from Mr. Bloodgood's office," replied the boy, politely.

While Mr. Taylor was reading the letter, Stanley looked around the room and saw hundreds of photographs of different plays mounted in frames standing around.

The carpenter lad remained in the background, prepared to pilot the visitor back the way he had brought him.

There were other rooms and interesting sights in the building that Stanley did not get the opportunity to see.

Neither did he get a glimpse of the paint frames, where several artists were painting a large drop, suspended some forty feet in the air by the thinnest of steel cables.

Mr. Taylor scribbled a reply on the back of the letter, put it back in the envelope, and handed it to Stanley with a nod of dismissal.

Then the two boys started to return to the ground floor.

On their way down one of the flights through the fly galleries they overtook an attache of the place who had charge of a well-dressed woman and lovely girl of perhaps sixteen years.

"Now, Eva, do be careful," said the lady in a warning tone to the girl, who in exuberant spirits was skipping down the stairs rather recklessly.

"Don't mind me, mamma; I'm all right," replied the young lady, turning a mischievous look back at her mother.

That glance was a fatal one, for the girl slipped as she placed her foot on a piece of rope lying in her road, and she pitched head forward from the stairs down toward the stage, forty feet below.

She uttered a piercing scream as she disappeared over into the void encumbered with a network of ropes.

Her mother, with a despairing cry, fainted in the arms of the man with them.

The carpenter lad gave a gasp of horror and turned white.

Stanley was the only one who had nerve enough to look after the falling little beauty, whom he fully expected to see lying a disfigured corpse on the stage below.

Such, however, was not the case at that moment, though her position was sufficiently perilous.

Her downward flight had been temporarily arrested by a maze of ropes, through which, however, she was surely sinking to a point where nothing could have saved her.

Had she retained presence of mind herself she might have averted the catastrophe by clinging tightly to any one of a dozen ropes around her.

But, unlike a drowning person who will grasp at a straw, she seemed dazed by her terrible situation and made no effort on her own behalf.

There was only one way to head her off, and that was a forlorn chance, seemingly, at the best.

But Stanley, wide awake and intrepid, saw the bare chance and essayed it at considerable risk to himself.

He sprang out, caught a long hanging rope that swung above the stage, slid down it like a flash, and caught the girl around the waist just as she was dropping out of the ropes that had checked her downward plunge.

He had grabbed her in the nick of time, and as his arm tightened about her, and the other gripped the rope by which he was suspended, the pair swung out into the air twenty-five feet above the hard boards of the stage, and moved backward and forward like some gigantic pendulum marking time.

CHAPTER V.

STANLEY AND THE LITTLE ACTRESS.

Eva's shriek had been heard through the building, and many of the workmen employed in the immediate vicinity of the

accident rushed to the scene to find out what was the trouble.

They saw the swinging forms of Stanley and his burden in mid-air, and, without exactly knowing how they came to be in their dangerous situation, set to work at once to rescue them.

This was speedily accomplished by several of the men running up the narrow stairways to the fly galleries, and, laying hold of the long rope to which the boy was clinging, hauled them up to safety.

The girl never made a struggle while in Stanley's arms, but seemed to have had perfect faith in her deliverance through the efforts of the plucky boy.

By the time Stanley and Eva had been landed in one of the fly galleries the girl's mother came out of her swoon.

She called at once for her child in hysterical accents, and was comforted with the intelligence that Eva was safe.

"Where—where is she? Where is my darling Eva?" she cried.

"Here, mamma," came the ringing voice of the girl, who, with Stanley close behind, was hastening down the stairs to the point where her mother stood anxiously waiting to clasp her in her arms.

"My darling, I thought you were surely killed," cried the lady, straining her daughter to her heart.

"I would have been, mamma, but for this boy. He saved me from falling to the stage below."

"A mother's blessing on you, my boy," said the lady, fervently and gratefully. "How did you save my Eva?"

Stanley explained how he had accomplished the feat.

"You are a brave lad," said the lady. "What is your name?"

"Stanley Hope, ma'am."

"My name is Price—Mrs. George Price. This is my daughter Evangeline."

Stanley politely acknowledged the introduction.

"I am very, very grateful to you, Mr. Hope, for saving my life," now spoke up the girl, taking his hand in hers. "And so is mamma, of course. You mustn't go until we have talked to you, and till you promise to call on us at our home in the Elgin, on West Forty-fourth street."

Stanley bowed, and said he was delighted to make Miss Price's acquaintance, even under such strenuous circumstances. He further said that he would be pleased to call at her home if she wished him to.

"Of course I wish it," Eva insisted, impulsively. "I really couldn't think of not seeing you again, after what you have done for me. You really must call soon."

Miss Eva was not only strikingly pretty, but uncommonly chic and vivacious.

She talked to Stanley as if she had known him for years.

The boy thought she was the most attractive girl by long odds that he had ever met, and secretly he was pleased that it had been his good fortune to render her so signal a favor.

Eva and Stanley walked together to the main entrance, her mother and the studio attache following behind her.

"Mamma and I have just been through the building. Although I've been on the stage ever since I was a little girl, I never was in a play factory before."

"What, are you an actress?" asked Stanley, in surprise.

"Why, yes. Didn't you know?"

"No, I wasn't aware of the fact."

"Then you're not connected with the profession? I thought—"

"I was an actor?" laughed Stanley. "Hardly. Do I look like one?"

"Very much indeed."

"Well, I'm slightly connected with the business. I am working for a theatrical manager who has offices in the Empire Theater Building."

"Several managers have offices there. Do you mean Mr. Broughman?"

"No. I mean Mr. Bloodgood."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed the girl, delightedly. "Why, I have just signed a contract with Mr. Bloodgood for next season. He's going to star me in a new play that is being written expressly for me. Mamma and I are just going to his office now."

"Then I shall have the pleasure of accompanying you there."

"Why, of course. Mamma, what do you think?" cried Eva, turning around.

"What is it, my dear?"

"Mr. Hope is connected with Mr. Bloodgood's office."

"Indeed? In what capacity?"

Eva looked inquiringly at her escort.

"I'm a kind of general assistant and messenger," replied Stanley.

"And I thought he was an actor, mamma. You certainly should be a good one," she added, turning to her rescuer.

"Thank you, Miss Price," replied Stanley.

"Oh, don't mention it. But I don't want you to call me Miss Price. That's too formal, now that we know each other so well. You must call me Eva, and, if you don't mind, I'll call you Stanley. It would seem so funny to me to call you Mr. Hope."

"I'll call you Eva if you insist on it, Miss Price."

"And I may call you Stanley, I suppose?"

"Of course, if you wish to."

"Thank you. After this we'll be just like old friends, won't we? You saved my life, you know, which is just too romantic for anything. It will be in the papers to-morrow," she said, as the three walked in the direction of Broadway.

"How will it? There were no reporters—"

"Oh, mamma will see that the papers get all the facts. It will be a splendid advertisement for me. And we'll see that you get all the credit for your heroic act."

"But I don't want any credit for it, Miss—I mean Eva," objected Stanley, in some confusion. "I'm fully repaid in knowing that I saved you from a fatal fall. I'm glad to have been of service to you—in fact, there's nothing I wouldn't do to oblige you, but I don't want to get into the papers."

"I'm sorry, Mr.—I mean Stanley—but you must know that the papers never let a sensation of that kind get away from them. E'en if mamma and I said nothing, Mr. Taylor, the superintendent at Le Brun's, as soon as he hears about the narrow escape I had, will telephone the particulars to each of the big dailies. When we get back to our apartments we are sure to find several reporters waiting to get all the particulars from us. So you see it will be quite impossible for you to avoid getting into print."

"Well," replied Stanley, resignedly, "if it must be, it must be. I wonder what Mr. Bloodgood will say?"

"Why, he'll be tickled to death. It will bring me quite prominently before the public, and his press agent will, no doubt, use it next season in advertising me on the road. Really, he ought to raise your salary."

"I shouldn't object to that," laughed Stanley; "though he's paying me very good wages now—several dollars more than I got as an A. D. T. messenger."

"Were you once one of those boys who run around in uniforms with a number on their caps, carrying notes and small packages, and always seem to be in a hurry?"

"I was until lately."

"I never should have thought so. I am glad you're with Mr. Bloodgood, for I'll see you whenever I call upon him."

"I hope so."

"Now you must come and see me in *Mademoiselle Bonbon* at the Lyric. I'll send you a pass to-morrow. I'm not playing the leading role. I've a good part, though—that of *Fanfan, maid-in-waiting to Mam'selle*. I introduce a specialty in the second act that is one of the hits of the piece. You must come and see me to-morrow night. You will, won't you?"

"I couldn't think of refusing you, Miss—that is, Eva. Are you billed as Eva or Evangeline Price?"

"My name appears on the programme as Evangeline Vance. Mamma's name before she married was Vance. She was many years in the profession, and was playing leading parts at *McVicker's*, in Chicago, when papa met and married her. Then she retired. Soon after papa died I made my debut in child parts in repertoire on the road."

She then rattled on in her vivacious way about her early experience in the business, and how she had gradually risen to soubrette parts, and finally made a hit in "The Maid and the Magpie," after which she was engaged to support Miss Dora Bancroft in "Mademoiselle Bonbon," then playing at the Lyric.

In this piece her success was so pronounced that Manager Bloodgood had agreed to star her next season in a play that should be adapted to her special abilities.

Stanley listened to her with great interest, and was sorry when they arrived in front of the Empire Theater Building, and they took an elevator for the fifth floor, where Mr. Bloodgood's offices were.

CHAPTER VI.

STANLEY TELLS EVA PRICE ABOUT HIS PLAY.

Mr. Bloodgood was in his private office, and immediately received Eva Price and her mother on their arrival.

The first thing Eva had to tell him was about her narrow escape from a terrible death in the Le Brun Studio.

The manager was not only astonished to hear her story, but amazed to learn that the handsome and clever little actress owed her life to his young assistant, Stanley Hope.

Mr. Bloodgood at once called Stanley into the private office and questioned him before the ladies as to his part in the affair.

"You are certainly a plucky lad, Stanley," he said, "and I have no doubt that Miss Price is very grateful to you for the service you rendered her."

"I am, indeed—more than I can ever express," cried Eva, impulsively. "I shall never forget it as long as I live—never!" with a shudder, as the remembrance of her peril came back to her more strongly than ever.

When mother and daughter were ready to leave for their home they went out by the reception-room in order to see Stanley and tell him that he must call at their apartments some afternoon that week, as Mr. Bloodgood had promised to let him off for that purpose, and the boy promised to do so.

Of course, Mr. Bloodgood told Miss Sanderson about Stanley's nervy and thrilling act when he called her inside to give her some dictation, and when she returned to the reception-room she regarded her young assistant with more respect and admiration than ever.

"Why didn't you tell me what you did over at the studio?" she asked him at once. "Are you so modest that you don't want to blow your own trumpet?"

"I thought I'd let you find it out through the papers, Miss Sanderson, as I understand it is bound to be printed," replied Stanley, with a flush.

"But you really ought to have told me about it when you came in, and the ladies went inside to see Mr. Bloodgood. I'm almost provoked with you for keeping the matter to yourself. Didn't you suppose that it would interest me very much to learn of your plucky action from your own lips? Why, I consider you a hero of the first magnitude."

"Don't, Miss Sanderson. It is very embarrassing to be praised for doing one's duty," protested Stanley.

"But think how you saved that girl's life, sliding down that rope at no small risk to yourself," said Miss Sanderson.

"It was the only way she could have been saved. If I had stopped to consider the risk of the venture it would have been all up with her."

"Well, I want you to tell me all about it. How did the accident happen?"

Stanley told her the particulars as he knew them, dwelling as little as possible on his own share in the affair.

"I think you are a remarkable boy," replied Miss Sanderson, decidedly, when he had finished. "You can't receive too much praise for your conduct."

Stanley made no reply, and the young lady went to her machine and began to typewrite a couple of letters from her notebook.

When Stanley returned from lunch he found a bright young reporter waiting to interview him about the studio affair.

Before he had finished, another reporter came in who represented a morning newspaper, and the boy had to go over the facts again.

A third and a fourth reporter dropped in later, and Stanley good-naturedly obliged them with the information they were in quest of.

All the later editions of the afternoon papers had a more or less graphic story in about the miraculous escape from death of Miss Evangeline Vance, the charming young actress of the Lyric Theater.

While due credit was accorded Stanley, the articles were all written around the popular favorite of the stage, making her part in the thrilling episode as prominent as possible.

This suited the boy immensely, as he was just as well pleased to play second fiddle in the newspapers.

The morning editions had fuller accounts, and Miss Eva certainly received a good deal of free advertising out of her perilous adventure.

About eleven o'clock Stanley received by messenger boy two orchestra tickets for that evening's performance at the Lyric, inclosed in a dainty note from Miss Eva, in which she thanked him all over again for his gallant conduct in saving her life, and winding up with the hope that he would not fail to be at the performance of "Mademoiselle Bonbon" that evening.

After such a strong invitation Stanley felt that he could not afford to disappoint Miss Price, so he induced his mother to accompany him to the theater.

It is probable that the little actress singled him out in the audience, for she knew the location of the seats she had sent him.

At any rate, she never appeared to better advantage than she did that night, and she imparted all the vim that was in her into her specialty in the second act, and was accorded the most tumultuous applause.

Whether Miss Bancroft, the star, was pleased or not with the extra prominence Miss Eva got that evening is not on record.

Between the second and last acts an usher waited on Stanley with a note from Eva saying that she wished he would call around to the stage door after the performance.

When the show was over, Stanley inquired the way to the stage door, and when he and his mother made their way there, he showed the note to the watchman, who admitted them to the region behind the curtain.

It was the first time either had ever been in that part of a theater, and the boy found sufficient to interest him while waiting for Eva to appear from her dressing-room, which she did in a short time, accompanied by her mother.

Stanley introduced his mother to Eva and Mrs. Price, and then the actress invited them to take supper with herself and her mother.

They accepted the invitation.

They went to a well-known Sixth avenue restaurant, where Eva monopolized Stanley, much to the boy's satisfaction.

Stanley and his mother left Eva and her mother at the entrance to the Elgin apartment house, on West Forty-fourth street, and then took a car home.

After that Stanley saw a good deal of the little actress, either at the office or at her own home, and their friendship grew as the days went by.

One afternoon that Stanley called to see her he told her about the play he had written.

"Have you really written a play, Stanley?" she exclaimed, in pleased surprise.

"Yes; but I suppose it doesn't amount to anything. It is my first attempt in that line."

"You must bring it up and let me read it," she said.

"I will, if you wish me to; but I'm afraid it will only make you laugh."

"I wouldn't make fun of anything belonging to you," she protested. "What kind of a play is it?"

"It's a Western melodrama."

"That's the kind of play Mr. Bloodgood is having written for me. I'm to be featured, you know, in a kind of harum-scarum wild Western part that will give me a chance to introduce several specialties in the way of songs and dances."

"My play is something on the same order. It's called 'Nugget Nell.' Nugget Nell is the leading part—a kind of wild girl of the mines. She does all sorts of thrilling stunts at critical moments. After seeing you as Fanfan at the Lyric, I think it would just suit you if it was constructed properly for the stage."

"You interest me very much, Stanley. I am in love with the title 'Nugget Nell.' It is quite suggestive of the line of business that I'm to have in the play that Mr. Bloodgood is having written for me. Now, I want you to bring your play here to-morrow, and you and I will go over it together, and I'll make suggestions where they may be needed, and if I like your ideas and construction better than Mr. Bloodgood's play, there is no telling but that I may be able to find some excuse to turn the other down and insist on using yours."

"If you only could, Eva," said Stanley, eagerly. "I'd be tickled to death to have you act in a play of mine. I know it would be a success."

"And it would please me very much to do so. In fact, I may say I'd rather play in one of your dramas than any one else's."

Stanley went home that afternoon feeling that a new future was opening before him.

CHAPTER VII.

"NUGGET NELL."

Stanley brought his play along with him when he came to the office next morning.

He made no mention of it to Miss Sanderson, however, but kept it hidden in one of the pockets of his overcoat.

About half-past four he was through for the day, and he made a bee-line for the Elgin apartment house, where Eva and her mother lived.

The little beauty was expecting him.

"Did you bring your play?" she asked eagerly.

"Sure I did," replied Stanley. "Isn't that why I'm here?"

"Then we'll start in and read it together. I'm just dying to see what it is like, for I've done nothing but think about

that delightful name—'Nugget Nell.' It hits me hard, that title does. If your play is only half as good as its name, I am sure we'll be able to make something out of it."

Stanley got out of his overcoat and brought the manuscript of his play to the front.

"Whatever induced you to write a play, Stanley?" she asked, as they sat on the lounge together. "You must have a great liking for the stage."

"I have. I've gone to lots of shows, and I've read lots of play-books. When I got the idea in my head to write a drama I began to notice and study how the playwrights constructed their pieces. I paid particular attention to the ways in which the different characters were introduced and how the plot was developed. I saw how they sandwiched in funny business, and I took note of how the scenery was constructed and arranged on the stage. Now, if I only had some actual experience behind the scenes I think that in time I could turn out a pretty good play of the kind that Mr. Bloodgood puts on the road. They're not first-class, you know. He only gets time at the second-class houses, and caters to the ordinary people, not the Broadway class."

"How long has it taken you to write this?"

"About six months, at nights, and whenever I got a chance and happened to be in the humor for writing."

"You must be pretty well educated, Stanley."

"I've been through the grammar school, and I went two years to the high school. Then father died unexpectedly, and I had to get out and hustle."

"I like your mother very much indeed—and she's so refined."

"Thank you, Eva."

"I should dearly like to meet your sister. I think you said that she was something of a cripple?"

"Yes; Jennie had a fall when she was very young, and it permanently injured her spine."

"I feel so sorry for her. I will call around some afternoon at your flat and make her acquaintance. I am sure I shall like her, if she is anything like you."

"She will be pleased to know you," replied Stanley, with a flush. "I have talked so much about you, and mother has told her that you are such a lovely girl—"

"No bouquets, Stanley, please," said Eva, laughingly.

"I am only telling you what mother says about you, and she never says what she doesn't mean."

"Your mother is very nice to have such a good opinion of poor me," replied the little actress, demurely.

"Oh, mother knows a nice girl when she meets one," answered Stanley, with an emphatic nod of his fine curly head.

"I think it is time we looked at your play," said Eva, with a sweeping glance at the handsome boy from under her long eyelashes.

It was one of those kind of glances that are always irresistible with man or boy, and it thrilled Stanley from his head to his feet.

We are bound to say that Eva was a past master in the art of feminine fascination, and she evidently meant to win the boy for her own special self.

Stanley opened his manuscript at the first page and began to read, Eva laying her clasped hands on his left shoulder and resting her dimpled chin on them.

"Act I—Scene: Interior of the Miners' Retreat, at Poker Flat. Bar near right upper entrance; door left center of back scene; table with three stools down, left center; table with two stools, right center; doors left and right."

"That sounds all right," nodded Eva, "for the stage setting of the act. You want a mountainous or landscape backing for the door at back, which is practical, I suppose—that is, it opens and shuts to admit the different characters, or to permit them to make their exit into the outer air."

"That's right," said Stanley.

"Dan Mulligan (that's the proprietor of the place, Eva), discovered wiping glasses behind the bar; Missouri Bill talking to him across bar; Sheriff Bagley and two miners drinking and playing poker at table, left hand. Enter Jacob Garnett (that's the villain) door in flat."

"That reads well for an opening," said the little actress, approvingly.

Stanley, having finished describing the stage setting and disposition of characters at the rise of the curtain, started off with Garnett's opening remark after he made his entrance through the door from the outside.

Eva listened with great interest as the scene developed, occasionally suggesting corrections, which the young author made a note of on the margin of his manuscript.

The reading proceeded swimmingly until Stanley came to the place where Nugget Nell enters hurriedly, to music, door in flat.

Then Eva clapped her hands.

"That's just the right kind of an entrance for me," she exclaimed delightedly. "You hear the music first, you know, very low, but gradually rising, until with what they call a flourish of the orchestra I come dashing in and stand for a moment thus."

Eva sprang up and showed Stanley just how she would come on if she was playing Nugget Nell.

"That's right," exclaimed the young playwright. "That's it exactly. Just my idea."

Then the reading went on until the first act was finished.

"I think that's just splendid," said Eva, enthusiastically. "I had no idea that you could do so well for a beginner. Now go on with act two."

The second act was declared to be much better than the first one, as, according to all rules of dramatic art, it should have been.

At the finale of the act Nugget Nell's father is accused of the murder of Mulligan, proprietor of the Miners' Retreat, by Jacob Garnett, the villain.

Nell comes forward to defend her father.

The villain laughs sardonically.

"Back, Jacob Garnett," cried Nugget Nell. "My father is no murderer. The author of this crime will come to light some day, and the only witness to it will not judge the guiltless."

"There was no witness," sneers the villain.

"Yes, there was—up thar!" exclaims Nugget Nell, pointing upward, "before whom some day you will have to stand face to face!" (Picture—curtain.)

"That's splendid," said Eva. "That would win the house every time."

Stanley then read the third act, which wound up with the main climax of the play.

The villain has succeeded in getting possession of the Poker Flat claim, which rightfully belongs to Nugget Nell's father.

He claims to have won the deed to it through a game of poker with the old man.

The miners all doubt his story, but he holds the deed to prove his statement.

"You say you won it, Jacob Garnett," cries Nugget Nell, "but you can't make me believe that you done it square. Boys," turning to the men, "lend me a stake and I'll win back dad's claim from this rascal."

The miners take up a collection and hand it to her.

The villain sneeringly accepts her challenge, and they sit at a table, while the rest crowd around.

"Now, then, Jacob Garnett," exclaims Nugget Nell, "see if you can cheat me as easily as you did my poor old dad."

They play and each win a hand.

The cards are dealt for the deciding play.

Garnett raises her bet two thousand dollars.

"A short time ago you offered my dad twelve thousand dollars for the claim. I have just that sum by me, and I raise you that amount—the price you set upon the deed you hold," says Nugget Nell.

The villain laughs wickedly.

"Tis true, I did offer your father the sum you mention," he says, "but since the Poker Flat claim has been in my possession mining stocks have gone up. I now value it at sixty thousand dollars. There is the deed. I see your ten-thousand-dollar raise and go fifty thousand better."

Nell is in despair, when her lover comes to her rescue.

"Boys," says he, "did you ever hear of the Little Nugget claim up in Nevada?"

"Certainly, pard," exclaims a miner; "it's the richest mine in the district."

"Well, I'm the owner of that bit of property, and here is the dockyment to prove it. I value it at more than the Poker Flat claim, but I give it to my little pard here," handing it to Nugget Nell, "to do with as she likes."

"And I place it against that Poker Flat claim and call him," cries Nell. "What have you got?"

"Four kings," says the villain.

"Boys, I've got him," cries Nell, triumphantly.

"Ha! What do you hold?" demands Garnett.

"An old Arkansaw hand—four aces!" and Nell holds up her cards.

"Confusion!" cries the villain, drawing his knife.

"And a pair of sixes!" adds Nugget Nell, whipping out a brace of revolvers and covering the villain. (Tableau—quick curtain.)

The climax pleased and excited Eva so much that she threw her arms around the young author's neck and kissed him. Stanley was nearly paralyzed.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS PRICE'S UNSATISFACTORY INTERVIEW WITH HER MANAGER.

"This is the play for me," the little actress exclaimed, with enthusiasm. "Mr. Bloodgood must see it. I'm going to play 'Nugget Nell,' or I'll throw up my contract."

"You don't mean that, Eva," said Stanley, every nerve in his body tingling alike from the girl's kiss and her praise of his play.

"I do mean it, Stanley. Now read the last act, and let me see how it winds up."

The play ends as all plays end—with right triumphant and the villain in the hands of the law.

"You must leave your manuscript with me, Stanley. I want mother to read it, and then, after you've altered the dialogue and business where I have made the suggestions, toning down the negro and making more of the Chinaman, I'll take it to Mr. Bloodgood and insist that it is the play I mean to star in. I don't mean to tell him that you wrote it until he's accepted it, had the scenery painted and is about to order the paper, posters, hangers and other printed matter used to advertise the show; then I'll have him put your name on every sheet as the author."

"Hold on, Eva. You forget that Mr. Bloodgood has made a contract with Mr. Bacon, the well-known playwright, to write the play in which you are to star. He has paid him five hundred dollars down to bind the contract, and Mr. Bacon is to receive five hundred dollars for each of the four acts as he submits them and they are approved."

"I don't care," retorted the little actress. "I'll refund Mr. Bloodgood the five hundred dollars and tell him to call the deal off. I shall speak to him to-morrow about it."

"I'm afraid he won't listen to you. In the contract you made with him he is to supply the play, and you are simply engaged to create the principal part. You are to be featured as the star at a stated sum per week."

"Yes, and if the play is a frost the company will be disbanded and I will be out of work. Oh, these managers are all right—for themselves," said Eva, sarcastically. "Well, I'm going to kick right now, and kick hard."

Accordingly, next day Eva presented herself alone at Mr. Bloodgood's office and proceeded to lay the law down to her next season's manager.

He listened to the charming girl with a half-smile until she had had her say, and then he had his.

"Mr. Bacon has just sent in the first act of 'Golden Gulch,' and I want you to look it over and see how it strikes you," he said suavely.

"But it doesn't strike me at all," objected the little actress, vehemently.

"How can you tell that until you have read it?" replied Mr. Bloodgood, calmly.

"I don't want to read it."

The manager smiled indulgently.

"Why not?"

"Well, I don't like the name, for one thing—so there!" flashed Eva.

"Oh, that's immaterial. We can have another name, if we can decide on a better one."

"The play I have, 'Nugget Nell,' is the play I want," persisted the girl, with emphasis.

"You forget, Miss Price, that, according to our contract, you have no voice in the selection of the play. I am paying for it; I am furnishing the scenery and other effects; I am selecting the company and putting the show on the road. I have simply engaged you to play the leading part, and have agreed to feature you in all the papers, large and small. You will get your money every Monday, whether we pull houses or not, as long as it holds the road. I hope I have made this quite clear to you, my dear young lady. You must understand that I am not your business manager, but the manager and proprietor of the company and the play, and you are working for me. Some day, perhaps, when you are of more importance in the profession, you may be able to dictate different terms, but for the present you will please recollect that you will simply be a member of the 'Golden Gulch' company—the most important one, perhaps, but still a member, just the same. Have you anything else to say?"

replied the little actress, indignantly. "I've set my heart on playing 'Nugget Nell.' "

"Might I ask where you got hold of this play you are talking about?"

"Oh, I got hold of it all right," retorted Eva, with a flash of resentment in her eyes. "Don't think for a moment that you can corner all the good things in the business."

Manager Bloodgood smiled in a paternal kind of way.

"Who is the author of this production?"

"I sha'n't tell you—so there!" she retorted, defiantly.

"I'm sorry you're angry, Miss Price," replied Mr. Bloodgood, soothingly.

"I'm not angry, I'm only disappointed—that's all. I suppose you think that Mr. Bacon is the only man who can fit me with a part, just because he's got a name, and is a member of the Sheep's Club and the Dramatic Authors' Society. Well, let me tell you, Mr. Bloodgood, that the author of 'Nugget Nell' may be young, and perhaps inexperienced, but some day he'll make your Mr. Bacon look like thirty cents. When that time comes you'll be sorry that you didn't accept his first play."

Miss Evangeline Price, having spoken her mind, rose from her chair and passed out into the reception-room with the air of an injured queen.

As for Mr. Bloodgood, he smiled softly to himself, turned to his desk, and was soon deeply engaged in business.

Eva turned as she neared the door leading into the corridor and met Stanley's eye.

She beckoned to him, and he followed her outside.

"You look as if you'd had a run-in with Mr. Bloodgood, Eva," said Stanley, sympathetically.

"I did," she answered, in an agitated voice. "He's a mean old bear, that's what he is."

"I'm sorry, because I suppose it was all on account of my play."

"It was. He wouldn't listen to my request that 'Nugget Nell' be substituted for Mr. Bacon's piece. He laid the law down to me in a way I didn't like at all. You'd think he's the master and I'm his slave. But I won't stand for it. I won't act in Mr. Bacon's play, not if I never act again in my life," and tears of vexation sprang into the beautiful eyes of the little actress.

"You mustn't talk this way," said Stanley, soothingly. "You know that a contract is a contract. Mr. Bloodgood can hold you to the terms of his, and if you refuse to live up to it he can enjoin you in court from acting for any other manager in the country."

"I wish I hadn't signed with him, the old bear!" cried Eva, despondently. "I am just crazy to act in your play, Stanley. I know I should make a hit in it, and I want to do that for your sake."

"Thank you, Eva. You are very good to say that. I am greatly obliged to you for the interest you are taking in my drama, but you mustn't injure your professional outlook for me. I'd sooner destroy the play and never write another, much as I love the work and hope one day to succeed in it, than cause you the least trouble. You believe me, don't you, Eva?" and the boy looked down into her glowing face.

"Yes, Stanley, I do," she replied softly.

"I hope we may always be friends, because—well, because I like you very much indeed."

"Of course we will always be friends, the best of friends," said the girl, impulsively, laying her dainty gloved hand on his arm. "You are my ideal, and I like you—next to mother, so there!"

She smiled archly through her glistening eyes.

"Good-by," she added, holding out her hand, which he instantly took. "Be sure and call this afternoon or to-morrow, for I want to talk with you about 'Nugget Nell.' If I can't play the part next season, because that old ogre won't let me, I will some other time."

She started for the elevator, blowing a kiss back at him just as she vanished around the corner into the main corridor.

"She's a dear, sweet girl," breathed Stanley, as he looked after her. "I wish—"

Then he opened the door and re-entered the office.

CHAPTER IX.

STANLEY, THROUGH EVA, HELPS TALBOT TORRENS GET WORK.

When Stanley stepped out of the elevator on his way to lunch that day he ran against Talbot Torrens, the heavy man, standing in the entrance to the building and swinging his cane as though he was dressed up on the upper Rialto instead of the lower.

"Yes; I think you are real mean and not a bit nice to me,"

"Gadzooks! Well met," exclaimed the actor, laying his shabbily gloved hand on the boy's arm. "By my halidom, thou art looking uncommonly prosperous. The vampire must be treating thee well, which methinks is not his habit. Probably he is grateful that thy strong arm shielded him that day from my just vengeance. Ah, boy, that was a scurvy trick which thou played upon me. But for thee I had cracked his nut and let in a little light on his sordid brain. But I hold thee no grudge for it. Prithee, hast thou got a lonesome nickel in thy trousers that thou fain wouldest loan to one who in his day hast played with Booth?"

"Sure, Mr. Torrens," replied Stanley, handing him five cents. "I wish I could afford to give you more, for you appear to be unfortunate."

"Odds bobs! Thou hast a kind heart, and I thank thee. Aye, I am as you have observed—unfortunate. My name is up at all the agencies, but the managers will have none of me. Some one—perchance it may be the vampire—hast injured me by word of mouth, attacked my reputation as an actor. It is hard times, young man. 'Who steals my purse steals trash; but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which enriches him not, and makes me poor indeed.' I will now hie me to Sixth avenue and invest thy largess in a plate of kidney stew, which my stomach stands much in need of."

Thus speaking, the heavy man walked off with head erect, as though he was the popular favorite, and not an actor whose fortunes were at a very low ebb indeed.

"Poor fellow," said Stanley to himself. "It's hard, at his age, to be a cast-off professional. It's a wonder he couldn't get into the Actors' Home."

Then the boy hurried away in a thoughtful mood to his own lunch.

At half-past three, Mr. Bloodgood, with his hat and coat on, stepped into the reception-room and paused before Stanley's desk.

He dropped a package on the top of the desk, saying:

"That's the first act of 'Golden Gulch.' When you are through with what you are doing, provided Miss Sanderson doesn't need you, take it up to Miss Price, and tell her that it is my wish that she look it over carefully and return it to me as soon as possible, with her criticism, if any, or any suggestions for its improvement."

"Very well, sir," replied the boy; and the manager passed out, after a word or two with his stenographer.

At half-past four Stanley pushed the electric button at the door of the Price apartments at the Elgin and was admitted by Eva herself.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said, and she looked as if she meant it.

"I've brought you the first act of 'Golden Gulch,'" he said, handing her the packet which Mr. Bloodgood laid on his desk an hour before.

She made a wry face as she accepted it.

Then he delivered the manager's message.

"I suppose I'll have to obey orders," she said reluctantly, "but I know I sha'n't like it a bit."

"I guess you'll find it a great deal better than my crude play. Mr. Bacon is an experienced writer for the stage and knows what he's about."

"I don't care how experienced he is," pouted Eva. "I like your play, and I can do much better in what I like than in what I don't like."

"Well, there's no use arguing against Mr. Bloodgood. He's the boss. When he says that 'Golden Gulch' goes, it goes, and that's all there is to it. He's the man that's backing the show with the money, and I suppose it's right he should have the whole say."

Eva, after a talk with her mother, had come to the sensible conclusion that she would be foolish to kick against a stone.

She was held by her contract, and had to accept Mr. Bloodgood's dictation.

Mother has read your play, Stanley, and she likes it very much indeed. She says it shows much promise, and thinks that with more experience you ought to make an opening for yourself in that line. She agrees with me that it would just suit the bill for the 'Golden Gulch' seems to be the place for it. I'll lay up all kind of applications in New York for the 'Golden Gulch'."

"That's the way I look at it," said Stanley, reluctantly.

"But I intend to play in it you know," said the little actress, with a smile of her own. "So I want you to do it for me, and I'll go along with my suggestions."

"I'll do that," replied Stanley, eagerly.

She brought out his manuscript and together they went over it, and she pointed out the changes she wanted, and which she said would make it go better.

She also indicated where a lot of dialogue could be materially reduced without hurting the scene.

When the boy took up his hat to go, she said:

"Now, Stanley, I want you to go on the road with me next season."

"I'd like to," he replied wistfully, "but I don't see how I can."

"Why not? Mr. Bloodgood will have to provide a new executive staff with the 'Golden Gulch' company. Now, you ask him to let you go out in some capacity, as you are anxious to learn the practical side of the show business."

"He told me that he intended to send me out some time with one of his companies, but I guess he meant after a year or so."

"Never mind what you think he meant; just strike him for a position with 'Golden Gulch,' and I will put in a good word for you, too."

"Will you?"

"I will, and he'll be willing to oblige me that much, I guess. If he objects there'll be something doing," she said spiritedly.

"What a little fighter you are, Eva," laughed Stanley. "Don't you know that it won't do the least bit of good to have another run-in with Mr. Bloodgood. If he wants me in New York I'll have to stay here. However, he owes me a favor for saving his head from getting broken, and perhaps he'll agree to let me go out with the company which you will head."

"How did you save Mr. Bloodgood from getting a broken head?" asked the girl, who had not heard about the incident.

Stanley told her of the attack made upon the manager by Talbot Torrens, the heavy man, and how he happened to be on the scene in time to save Mr. Bloodgood.

"If it hadn't been for that affair I still would be an A. D. T. messenger, and should not have the pleasure of knowing you," he concluded.

"And I would probably be dead and buried now, for you wouldn't have been at the Le Brun studio that morning when I fell from the stairs into the flies of the stage."

"That's right," nodded Stanley. "Indirectly, Talbot Torrens saved your life by being the cause of Mr. Bloodgood hiring me."

"It's funny how things come out in this world, isn't it?" she said thoughtfully.

"Yes. Poor old Torrens is on his last legs as an actor."

"How is that?" asked Eva.

"He hasn't a cent of money and can't get an engagement."

"Why can't he?"

"Because I guess he's out of date. Nobody wants him."

"But how does he live, then?"

"How do lots of people live who haven't a cent? By begging from their friends, if they have any, or from anybody at all. Mr. Torrens lives on the nickels he manages to pick up."

"If you say he indirectly saved my life I must help him," said Eva, generously. "I know Mrs. Brown, the theatrical agent, well. I'll beg her to get Mr. Torrens something to do. What's his line of business?"

"Heavies; but I dare say he'll take anything that comes along."

"Have you his address?"

"No; but I see him every day or two about lunch time. He's discovered that I'm good for a nickel, and I find him waiting at the door."

Eva was as good as her word.

She spoke to Mrs. Brown, with the result that Talbot Torrens got an opening with a cheap repertoire company that wanted a heavy man.

Eva paid Mrs. Brown her commission, and gave Mr. Torrens a ten-dollar bill to help him get into shape.

The actor seemed to be grateful to both her and Stanley for the boost, and swore he'd make it all right some day.

At any rate, it was a kindly act on the little actress' part, and kind acts are never lost.

CHAPTER X.

A PIECE OF VILLAINY THAT RESULTS IN A REAL SENSATION.

The theatrical season came to an end in New York about the last of May.

The run of "Mademoiselle Bonbon" at the Lyric closed on the first of June, and Eva Price was at liberty.

Then she and her mother went to the Catskills for a rest.

Stanley continued at Mr. Bloodgood's, but he and Miss Sanderson had a snap during the summer.

Mr. Bloodgood engaged the company that was to support Eva Price in "Golden Gulch," and by the first of August the Le Brun studio had completed and packed ready for shipment all the scenery, properties and mechanical effects necessary for the proper production of the play.

The manager had agreed to send Stanley out as assistant to the acting manager of the company, and after a conference with that gentleman the boy found that he would be expected to lend a hand wherever his services could be found available, even to giving the property man a lift.

A "call" was printed in a theatrical weekly notifying the members of the four attractions controlled by Mr. Bloodgood to report at the Broadway office for instructions regarding rehearsals that were to be begun at once on the stage of a city theater, the temporary use of which Mr. Bloodgood had secured for that purpose.

Of course, on the day in question Eva Price was among those present.

The rehearsals of "Golden Gulch" were to be held every other day, under the personal direction of the author.

Stanley managed to be present at a number of these, and picked up a great many valuable points.

Eva's part was somewhat similar to Bret Harte's "M'liss," and in many respects not unlike Stanley's own "Nugget Nell."

Its situations were not so broad and melodramatic as the boy's play, though there was one uncommon "thriller" at the close of the third act.

Stanley thought it was lacking in the humorous element, as the one low comedy part was not especially prominent.

The play, however, had been written to make everything subservient to "Miggles," Eva's part, and Stanley thought it ought to have been named "Miggles."

In view of the fact that her son was going on the road, Mrs. Hope had saved up a little fund to tide Jennie and herself over until Stanley began weekly remittances from the different towns on his route.

Eva's mother, who had taken a great liking to Mrs. Hope and her invalid mother, however, proposed that the three take a small, general flat uptown and share the living expenses, Mrs. Price agreeing to contribute the larger part of the rent.

This arrangement greatly pleased Stanley, and it was carried into effect.

Rehearsals of "Golden Gulch" progressed without the occurrence of anything of a remarkable nature, theatrically considered, and gradually the members of the company familiarized themselves with the lines and business of their respective parts.

The company was to open at Hornellsville, N. Y., on Monday, September 1, for one night, and then work its way west over the route selected.

The advance agents of the organization in due time departed for that town, and two days later Miss Sanderson showed Stanley the following telegram, which came into the office while he was there:

"HORNELVILLE, N. Y., Aug. 27.

"MR. JOHN BLOODGOOD,

"No. — Broadway, New York:

"Town worked up in good shape. House (theater) dark all week. Ought to play S. R. O. (standing room only).

"WILLIAM SINGER."

"That looks encouraging," remarked Stanley.

"Very," responded the stenographer.

From Mr. Singer there came by mail a few days later a bulky letter of advices for the benefit of all concerned with the company.

This letter, which contained useful information relating to the towns in Hornellsville, the arrivals and departures of the trains they were to use, etc., was posted up conspicuously in the theater where the company was rehearsing.

On Sunday morning the members of the company met at the Erie station in Jersey City to take a certain train for Hornellsville.

Stanley and Eva arrived together and took a seat side by side in the car.

The train reached the company's destination at about six o'clock, and as members of the profession usually get up at the "Soda House," all hands got into the hotel's free busses and reached the company in time for dinner.

At ten o'clock the company went to the Grand Hotel for the first rehearsal.

Two hours before that time Stanley accompanied the property man to the depot, where the car containing the scenery, baggage and other effects of the organization had been switched to a siding, and helped the transfer people get the stuff on their big wagon.

On arriving at the theater, Stanley saw that the trunks of the members of the company were placed in the proper dressing-rooms, according to a list furnished by the stage manager, after which he helped the property man and the electrician.

The business manager then gave him a list, forwarded by the advance agent, of all the stores where a free ticket had been left to pay for billboard privileges, and told him to go around and see that the company's lithographs and other small printing was properly displayed, and to make a note of any delinquencies.

This job took him some time, and then he was through for the day.

The fact that there had been no attraction at the Opera House during the preceding week gave a good boost to the advance sale of seats, and Stanley learned that about half the house was sold.

He carried this news to Eva, and naturally she was delighted to hear it.

"We're bound to have a good house to-night," she said, "as the indications all point that way."

"That's right," nodded Stanley. "Mr. Singer wired Mr. Bloodgood last Wednesday that he expected we would play to the capacity of the Opera House."

After dinner the members of the company started for the Opera House to dress.

As Stanley had nothing to do in the front of the house, which was looked after by the business manager, he had been pressed into a small part, one of the miners, by the stage manager, and his name appeared in the programme.

At eight o'clock the theater was practically full, and the play began.

Eva Price, or Evangeline Vance, as she appeared in the bills, was received with enthusiasm, and she proved to be the whole show.

Her specialties were vociferously encored, and by the time the curtain rose on the third act it was admitted she had made a big hit.

There were two scenes in this act.

In the first the villain arranges to do up the leading man, Miggles' lover, by sending him a decoy letter to meet Miggles near the great flume which crosses a lonesome defile in the mountains, and the villain's confederate brings back word that the lover will keep the appointment.

The two scoundrels then start for the defile to trap the unsuspecting man.

Miggles hears of this piece of treachery too late to warn her lover, and then decides that the only way she can reach the place of meeting in time, perhaps, to foil the rascals is by floating down the swift current of the flume on a log.

In this case the flume, which is an artificial channel for conveying water, consisted of a long, sectional wooden trough, elevated on stilts, and was supposed to extend for several miles down the mountains to the place where the gold-washing was going on.

A section of this flume was shown in the second, or great, scene of act three of the drama, which represented a running stream and waterfall, which was one of the mechanical effects of the piece.

The scene was short but sensational.

The flume ran from the extreme right upper entrance diagonally across stage to second entrance, right hand, and Price, in the character of Miggles, was to traverse its entire length on an imitation log at the critical part of the curtain, arriving at the point where there was a "run," or jump, to the plane, to the stage, in time to save her lover and defeat the villain.

The flume, which was set before the curtain went up on the act, was supported by stout pieces of wood kept in place by iron braces fastened by small bolts to the stage.

When in place each upright was examined by the carpenter to make sure that it was secure, for any mishap might prove a serious matter to Eva.

Just before the front cloth (scene) was lifted to reveal the canyon, Stanley, who was standing near the second entrance, waiting for Eva to climb up to her log, heard one of the iron braces snap.

Smith, who was standing near the first entrance, heard the snap and, thinking it was the carpenter, went to him and said, "What's the trouble?"

the center uprights in a somewhat stealthy manner and try them.

The man had no call to do this, as the carpenter had already tested the stilts, and Stanley was about to call him away, when the stage manager shouted for the boy, and he hurried off to see what was wanted.

The moment he was gone the man Smith took a small wrench from under his vest, stooped down and dexterously removed the bolts from the clamps at the base of two of the uprights, tilting them just sufficiently so that when Eva in her downward flight struck that section of the flume the jar would cause it to topple over and precipitate the girl to the stage.

When Stanley returned a few minutes later his sharp eyes noticed that the flume looked a bit out of plumb, and he would have called the carpenter's attention to the fact but that at that moment the drop in front was raised and the scene was on.

Eva was already seated on the log at the elevated end of the flume in readiness for her cue to come on.

Stanley was anxious for her safety in this act, for he felt that there was an element of danger in her swift flight downward across the stage.

Therefore the longer he looked at the tampered uprights the more nervous he became as the moment for her descent approached.

He determined not to leave the spot until she had accomplished her sensational entrance.

At last Eva got her cue, the stage hand pushed her forward, and she shot into view of the audience.

The feelings of the spectators had been wound up to the highest pitch by the unfortunate position of Miggles' lover, who had been captured by the villains, bound hand and foot, and was about to be thrown into the canyon.

When Eva appeared, coming to the rescue, the audience burst into applause, for they scented the discomfiture of the villains.

Stanley's anxious eyes followed Eva's downward flight, and he saw the unsupported section of the flume tremble, then wobble, then—

"Great Scott! It will be down!" he cried excitedly.

At that moment there was a splintering of wood, a lurch of the structure, a snap, then a crash.

The two supports fell to the stage, the flume split asunder, and Eva, with a thrilling scream, pitched head first straight for the edge of one of the three wings.

But Stanley was equal to the emergency.

He sprang forward, caught her in his arms, and all would have been well but for the fact that the fractured flume in failing caught the boy above the temple, and he went down, with Eva clasped in his arms, like a shot, rolled on his side, and lay there motionless like one dead.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ACCIDENT ACCOUNTED FOR, AND EVA AND STANLEY CALLED BEFORE THE CURTAIN.

The unexpected accident which had happened to the "star" of the play created great excitement both before and behind the curtain.

The act came to a sudden termination in a manner not down in the bills, and the stage manager ordered the prompter to ring down the proscenium drop as he ran onto the stage to find out the extent of the catastrophe.

It was found that Eva Price was not injured in the least. Stanley had caught her in the nick of time.

The boy, however, lay white and bleeding on the stage, still clasping the little actress in a vise-like grip.

Eva was released from his embrace, but before any one could congratulate her upon her wonderful escape she threw her arms around Stanley, raised his blood-stained head on her lap and burst into a passionate expression of grief.

"Oh, he is dead! He is dead!" she cried vehemently. "Get a doctor. Do something to bring him back to life."

The stage manager sent a messenger across the back street for a physician who lived nearly opposite the stage door, and the doctor was soon on the scene.

The doctor found Stanley and pronounced him merely stunned and not seriously hurt.

Eva was over beside herself with delight when she learned the physician's verdict, but she would not allow any one to touch Stanley, until the doctor requested that he be permitted to a large bottle of whisky.

While the hand of the doctor was bringing the lad to consciousness the stage manager went before the curtain and reassured the audience.

Then the orchestra started in to fill in time, and the stage manager began an investigation of the accident.

"There's been some crooked business at work here," said the master carpenter, pointing to the wrecked section of the flume.

"What do you mean?" demanded the stage manager, sharply.

"Do you see those two uprights?"

"I do."

"Well, do you see any sign of the bolts that held the clamps to the stage?"

"I do not."

"When that flume was set every bolt was in its place, and the uprights were as firm as so many rocks. I tested them myself to make sure that no accident could take place."

"But it seems an accident has taken place. How do you account for it?"

"Since I examined the structure the bolts of those two uprights were surreptitiously removed by some scoundrel for the purpose of bringing about the very catastrophe which has happened."

"Good heavens, man, you can't mean that!" fairly gasped the stage manager.

"I do mean it, for everything points in that direction. If the bolts had in some unaccountable way worked loose they would be lying around in the debris. Instead of which, I haven't been able to find one of the eight that I know were put through the clamps. It is the work of some infernal rascal on the stage."

"Who could be guilty of such a diabolical act? Why, the girl might have been killed."

"She would have been seriously injured but for young Stanley. When I heard the snapping of the trough I rushed in this direction and saw Miss Price pitching straight for the corner of that wing. Then the boy flashed before my eyes. As she landed in his arms the broken flume struck him on the head, and down he went like an ox stricken in the shambles. That boy deserves a medal from the manager, for he saved the star of the show from a knock-out."

At that moment the comedian of the organization stepped up to the stage manager and said that Stanley wanted to see him.

The man went at once to the place where the boy sat with his head bound up, and Eva beside him on the lounge, with the members of the company around them both.

"Have you discovered any cause to account for the breaking of the flume, sir?" asked Stanley.

"I am sorry to say that the carpenter asserts that there has been foul play at the bottom of it."

"Foul play!" cried Eva, in dismay.

"Foul play!" echoed the members of the company, agast.

"The screws that were put into the clamps to hold down those two particular uprights are not to be found. It looks as though they had been drawn by some unknown person with malicious intent. If I find out the guilty person, by the eternal I'll make an example of him!"

"Well, sir," said Stanley, "I don't want to make an accusation, but just before the front scene was pulled up I saw one of the local stage hands walk over to one of those uprights and try it."

"He did?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you identify the man?"

"I can."

The stage manager started off to round up the stage assistants connected with the Opera House.

He found one of them missing—the fellow named Smith.

The others were brought before Stanley, but the boy said none of them was the man he had reference to.

"Then it must be that man Smith," exclaimed the stage manager, with a dark look. "That fellow has a hang-dog look, anyway, and his nephew, whom I fired out this afternoon for intoxication, isn't a whit better. The man must be found."

The stage manager went away to inquire of the watchman when Smith had left the building.

In the meantime the carpenter was having the stage setting of the late act removed and the scenery for the last act, a plain timber, put in place so that the curtain could be finished.

Smith was located in a corner drug store by the stage and business managers and was sharply questioned.

He was surly and defiant, and his answers so suspicious that an officer was called in to help sift the matter.

It was decided to search him on the chance that the missing bolts might be on his person.

He showed fight at this suggestion, but when the policeman threatened to club him if he lifted his fists he sullenly submitted to the search.

The eight missing bolts were found in one of his pockets.

The stage manager was so furious at the discovery of the rascal's guilt that he was with some difficulty restrained from pummeling Smith on the spot.

Taxed with his crime, the fellow reluctantly admitted his guilt, and said that he did it out of revenge for the ejection of his nephew from the Opera House that afternoon.

He was removed to the station house, the business manager going along to make the charge against him.

When the stage manager returned to the theater he ordered the performance to proceed, but prior to the rise of the curtain he told Eva and Stanley to go before the curtain, as the spectators had made repeated calls for the little actress and the young man who had saved her.

Accordingly, Eva led Stanley before the footlights, much against his will.

They were received with a storm of applause, and bowed their acknowledgments.

After all, it was probably the proudest moment in the boy's life.

CHAPTER XII.

"GOLDEN GULCH" GOES UP IN SMOKE.

The Hornellsville papers next morning had a review of the show and a full account of the accident at the Opera House.

Stanley received great praise for his gallant rescue of the star, and reference was also made, on information furnished by the business manager to his plucky conduct in saving Eva's life months before at the Le Brun scenic studio in New York.

Altogether he was boosted before the public as a hero of the first magnitude, and shared with Eva, when they both came into court that morning, the attention of a packed mob of spectators.

The boy's evidence, but mainly the fact that the bolts were found on Smith's person, caused the magistrate to hold the rascal for trial.

Depositions were made before a notary, to be used at the trial, by Stanley, the stage and business managers, as it would not be convenient for them to appear in person when wanted.

So it was tried in due time, convicted, and sent to State's prison for two years.

The company started for the next town on their route at one o'clock, but the train was delayed owing to a washout caused by a big thunder-storm of the preceding night, and they arrived at their destination only in time to go to the theater without dinner.

They had a big house, for the news of the accident at the Hornellsville Opera House had been republished in the local papers, and lots of people, in consequence, came to see the bereave of the disaster.

The performance passed off without a hitch, and next morning the show moved on again.

There was more trouble in store for them, however, for on arriving in the town where they were billed to appear that evening the business manager found that the local authorities had just closed the Opera House on the ground that it was unsafe.

No performance was permitted, and the company had to remain idle that night.

Next day a smash-up along the railroad caused several hours' delay, and by the time the wreck was cleared away and their train proceeded on its way so many hours had been lost that the local manager had dismissed a large audience and the house was dark when they reached the town.

The performers began to look glum now and declare that there was a hoodoo on the organization.

This impression was strengthened next day, which was Friday, by a third hold-up on the railroad, and they barely connected with the theater in time to give the performance.

Even the sprightly Eva expressed a conviction that the company was doomed to misfortune in some shape or another, and might go to pieces.

"That's all nonsense!" laughed Stanley. "There's no such thing as a hoodoo."

"But there is," persisted the girl, with a positive nod of her head.

"What makes you think so?"

"Lots of things."

"Name some of them."

"Look at the trouble we've been up against right from the start."

"Pooh! All except the rascality of that man Smith were unavoidable accidents, liable to happen any time."

However, they showed in Toledo all right Saturday night and drew a big house.

They reached Chicago Sunday afternoon, where they had a week stand.

The scenery and baggage were removed to the theater before dark, and the business manager announced that the prospect that they would play to big business during the week was good.

But the culminating calamity of their short tour happened that night.

The theater was destroyed by fire, and everything connected with the show, except the performers' personal effects, which they had carried to their hotel, went up in smoke.

A dispatch announcing this disaster was wired to Manager Bloodgood in New York, and he ordered the company disbanded and the people to be furnished with transportation to the metropolis.

Eva, however, received a vaudeville offer for a week in Chicago, and decided to accept it and remain over.

She persuaded Stanley to remain as her protector, as she called it, insisting on paying his expenses for the favor.

During the week Eva's thoughts reverted to Stanley's play of "Nugget Nell," the manuscript of which he had brought along, at her request, to polish up.

"If we only could get an 'angel,' Stanley, we might be able to bring out your play," said Eva, one day during the week.

"Well, I wish we could run across one, then. I think it would be a good investment for him. You made a big hit in *Miggles*, as far as you went, and 'Nugget Nell' offers you the same opportunities to repeat your success. By the way, I ran across Mr. Singer this morning. He's in town. It would be a great thing if we could fill in the bulk of the 'Golden Gulch' dates with 'Nugget Nell,' wouldn't it?"

"It would be just splendid," replied Eva, enthusiastically.

"Mr. Singer knows the whole route. I've a great mind to speak to him about the matter and ask him what the chance is of getting a backer to put my play on the road, with you as the star."

"I would. It would be a good thing for him, too, as he's been unexpectedly thrown out of work with the rest of us."

So Stanley hunted up the advance agent at his hotel next day and broached his and Eva's plan.

"Why don't you two go back to New York next week and put it up to Mr. Bloodgood? You've got your railroad tickets. If Bloodgood intends to shelve 'Golden Gulch' until next season, he may, perhaps, consider your scheme."

"Well, come up this afternoon and talk to Eva about it. Whatever she says goes with me."

Mr. Singer agreed to call at their hotel and they parted.

Stanley strolled down to the lake to pass an hour.

He went out on a steamboat dock and sat down on a splat-head in the sun.

While he was there a crowd gathered on the wharf to take a steamer up the lake.

Among them Stanley noticed a handsomely dressed lady, accompanied by a little boy.

The boy had the usually exuberant spirits of a healthy child, and he persisted in breaking away from his mother time and again to pick up stones and chips of wood to throw out into the water.

After exhausting all the ammunition in his immediate locality he was quiet until he spied a stone lying on a string-piece, and, snatching his hand away from his mother's detaining grasp, he darted for the stone.

It happened that a piece of rope was stretched across the dock at this point close to the boards.

The boy in his eagerness did not observe it, and the consequence was he tripped over it, struck his head on the low stringer and rolled into the water.

It all happened like a flash under Stanley's eye, and the mother's terrified scream had hardly awakened the echoes of the dock and startled the crowd before he was ready for action.

He rushed to the point whence the child had fallen, and a moment later saw his body rise slowly to the surface a dozen feet out in the lake.

There was no boat within immediate reach, and Stanley did the only thing he could do under the circumstances to save the child's life—he threw off his coat and sprang into the water after him.

CHAPTER XIII.

STANLEY SAVES A LIFE AND FINDS AN ANGEL.

Great excitement and some confusion ensued on the dock.

Fifty pair of eyes followed the efforts of Stanley Hope to save the imperiled child.

The frantic mother had to be firmly held to prevent her from leaping overboard also.

As soon as possible some of the longshoremen in the vicinity procured a boat and started out to pick up Stanley and the boy, if he succeeded in preventing the child from going to the bottom for good.

In the meantime, Stanley, who was an excellent swimmer, was doing his level best to reach the little boy.

In spite of his best efforts the child went down a second time, and he came up so slowly that Stanley was afraid he was gone for good.

However, he finally reappeared close by, and our hero, after one vigorous stroke, seized him by the jacket.

Turning around to retrace his way to the wharf, he saw the boat coming, and by treading water waited for it to come up and take them aboard.

The child was unconscious and looked to be a goner.

Vigorous methods, however, brought back animation, after rescuer and rescued had been landed at the head of the dock.

A physician happened to be present, and he helped the good work along.

The mother was overjoyed to have her child so providentially restored to her.

She could not thank Stanley enough.

"You must give me your name and address," she insisted, when the lad said that he guessed he'd better go somewhere to have his soaked clothes dried.

"My name is Stanley Hope, ma'am, and I am stopping for the rest of the week at the St. Charles Hotel."

The lady wrote it down, and then handed Stanley one of her cards, on which her address, Pacific avenue, was printed.

"My husband will call and see you this evening," she said. "He will never be satisfied until he has thanked you for saving the life of our little boy."

"It isn't necessary for him to thank me, ma'am. You have already expressed your gratitude in unmistakable terms. I did the best thing I could under the circumstances, and I am glad that I was able to save your child."

Stanley then go away from the crowd, and going to a small nearby hotel made arrangements to have his apparel dried out, while he was permitted to occupy a room during the interval.

He got back to his hotel in time to go down to lunch with Eva, and he entertained her with an account of his adventure along the lakeside.

"My gracious, Stanley!" exclaimed the little actress. "You are getting to be a professional life-saver."

"It isn't my fault," replied the boy. "Things just happen when I'm around, and I have to jump in and pull the victims out of the fire."

"It's funny how so many accidents have happened in a few months in your presence."

"Maybe I'm what you call a hoodoo," laughed Stanley, "and I cause these accidents to happen."

"Well, if you do, you have all the trouble of saving the unfortunates," she smiled.

Mr. Singer did not call that afternoon to talk things over with Eva and Stanley, as he had promised to do, though they waited for him with some impatience.

"I guess he isn't interested very much in us," remarked the boy, in a tone of disgust. "He probably finds more amusement in some billiard hall."

"Never mind," replied Eva. "Mr. Singer isn't the only ad-

man in the business."

"He's got a record of the late 'Golden Gulch' route in his trunk, for he told me so this morning. If we can form any to put 'Nugget Nell' on the road, it would save trouble if we could annex the dates on the said route."

"I have to do that pretty soon, or it won't amount to

much. Mr. Bloodgood has probably notified the local managers all along the route to fill his time with some other attraction, and they are bound to do it if they can."

"Well, it can't be helped. How long do you suppose it would take us to engage a company and have scenery painted, and props and effects made up, if I advertised and caught a man willing to take charge of the venture?"

"Not so long in an emergency. You see, 'Nugget Nell' only needs four scenes, and they are easy ones to paint. No complicated effects are required like the flume in the canyon scene of 'Golden Gulch.' I guess I can come pretty near giving the show myself, for 'Nugget Nell' is constantly holding the stage. Under those circumstances we could hire a company, for that matter. If the show made money we could gradually weed them out for better ones."

Just then there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," sang out Stanley.

To their great surprise who should walk in but Talbot Torrens, looking a couple of hundred per cent. improved over what he was in New York some months since.

"How do you do, Mr. Torrens?" said Stanley. "Glad to see you. Please come in and shut the door."

"Marry and well met; this is indeed a glad surprise," said Mr. Torrens, walking toward them and gallantly kissing the tip of his gloved hand at Miss Price.

"How did you happen to locate us, Mr. Torrens, and what are you doing in Chicago?" asked Stanley.

"It were easily done," said the actor, taking possession of a convenient chair. "I did perceive upon the billboards in front of the Gaiety Theater the name I have cherished in my heart even as a benefactor—Miss Evangeline Vance Forsooth, to me it was a great surprise to perceive that this lady had gone into vaudeville. I hied me at once to the box office, got your address, sweet one, and came hither on the wings of the wind."

"Well, I am glad to see you, Mr. Torrens," said Eva, with a gracious smile. "How happens it that you are in Chicago? Are you playing here?"

"Nay, I am not playing, Miss Vance," addressing the little actress by her stage name. "The company I was out with closed two weeks since, and my name is again on the books."

"I am glad to see that you appear to be more prosperous than when in New York," said Stanley, with a smile.

"Odds bedkins! Be not deceived by my external habiliments. I have barely the price of a week's board in my purse. It is passing strange, but money and I are not close acquaintances."

The old actor remained for an hour with the young people, and hardly had he departed before a bellboy brought up the card of a gentleman who wished to see Stanley.

The boy went downstairs, and the caller, a fine-looking and handsomely dressed man, was pointed out to him.

"You wished to see me, sir?" asked Stanley, going up to him.

"Are you Stanley Hope, the lad who jumped off the Rosedale excursion pier this morning and saved the life of a little boy?" asked the gentleman, turning to him.

"Yes, sir."

The caller seized him by the hand and shook it warmly.

"That was my little son you rescued, and I have called to express to you my heartfelt gratitude, and to make you some sort of a substantial acknowledgment for a service which mere money can never wholly repay. My name is George Clarke."

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Clarke. I am also glad I was able to render you a service. But I didn't jump overboard after your little boy with any expectations of being rewarded for it."

"I am sure you didn't, young man; but nevertheless, as I'm a prosperous broker, it is only right that I should make you a present. I should like to give you my check for five thousand dollars as—"

"I hope you won't do any such thing as that, for I should certainly refuse it. I am quite satisfied with your thanks, for I only did my duty in trying to save your son."

"I honor your scruples, young man, about accepting anything in the nature of pay, but you ought to permit me to make you a present."

"Well, sir, as the water did not improve my clothes, and these are the best I have this side of New York, you can present me with a new suit if you like."

"You shall have the best suit that a Chicago tailor can produce," said the grateful gentleman. "That, however, is

but a small matter. What else can I do for you? Think, for I am anxious to show my gratitude."

"There is nothing else you can do for me—that is," added Stanley, as the thought suddenly struck him, "unless—"

"Unless what?" asked Mr. Clarke, eagerly, as the boy hesitated.

"Will you come into the reading-room, and I will tell you?" he said.

"Certainly," said the broker, and they adjourned to that room, which had but a single occupant at the time. "Now what is it?" he continued, as they seated themselves. "Speak out. If I can help you in any way I will do it with pleasure."

Stanley, after briefly telling the Chicago broker of his connection with Mr. John Bloodgood, the New York theatrical manager, and about his short experience with the "Golden Gulch" company on the road, explained to Mr. Clarke that he had written a Western drama which he was very anxious to bring before the public.

"The star part just fits one of the brightest little actresses on the stage to-day, who is the dearest friend I have, next to my mother and sister. I refer to Miss Eva Price, who is doing a turn in vaudeville this week at the Gaiety Theater under her stage name of Evangeline Vance."

"Why, a party of us saw her last night," said the broker. "She's uncommonly pretty and undoubtedly remarkably clever."

"Well, Mr. Clarke, if you'll loan me the money to put my play on the road, I'll accept it, with the understanding that I'll do my best if the play proves to be a winner. That's the only favor you can do for me."

"I'll do it. How much do you want?"

"I couldn't say, sir, without consulting with an experienced advance man I propose to engage if the project goes through; but it will probably be as much as a couple of thousand."

"Stanley Hope," said the broker, "I will back you up in this ambitious effort of yours to any reasonable amount, even if it is my pleasure to offer you twenty thousand dollars. Start right ahead, and call on me for the cash as you need it. As an earnest of my purpose I'll give you my check for the two thousand dollars you have suggested right here," and the gentleman produced his check-book.

"As a loan, sir," said Stanley.

"Of course, as a loan, if you insist on having it that way."

He wrote the check and handed it to the boy.

"Thank you, Mr. Clarke."

"Don't mention it, and remember when you want more call for it at my office in the Anchor Building, Lasalle street. Here is my card."

That terminated the interview, and Stanley dashed upstairs to Miss Price's room.

"Congratulate me, Eva," he cried, rushing to her side, flushed and breathless.

"On what?" she asked, with a smile.

"On my good luck. I'm going to put 'Nugget Nell' on the road at once. I've found an 'angel.'"

CHAPTER XIV.

STARTING THE SHOW.

That evening, after Stanley had taken Eva around to the stage door of the Gaiety Theater, he started off to hunt up Mr. Singer, the advance agent.

He found him in a billiard and pool parlor near the cheap hotel where he was staying.

"Hi to, Stanley," said the man. "I couldn't come around till a certain time, as I was busy."

"What at? Playing pool?"

"No, I had a date with a manager who's going to send a lottery out to my on the road."

"That so?" replied Stanley, doubtfully. "Did you connect?"

Singer shook his head and went on playing pool.

"Well, do you want a job?" asked Stanley.

Singer paused and looked at him.

"Heard of something in my line?"

"How much do you want?"

"Fifty and expenses," replied Singer, promptly.

"Too much," replied Stanley. "Make it forty and pay your own, and maybe—"

"Who's the gent that wants an advance man? Is he good for the money?"

"I guarantee he is," laughed Stanley. "I saw a two-thousand-dollar

sand-dollar check in his hand an hour ago, and I know there's more where that came from."

"The deuce you say. I'm your man. Take me around and introduce me to him," and Singer dropped his cue.

"Finish your game, and then we'll talk business," said the boy coolly.

Singer finished the game and then took a seat alongside of Stanley.

"Who is this manager, and how did you run across him? Are you and Miss Price going out with him?"

"I'll answer your last question first, Mr. Singer. Miss Price is going out with him as star in a new Western drama on the lines of 'Golden Gulch.' It is called 'Nugget Nell'."

"That isn't half bad. Has he got his paper ready?"

"He's got nothing ready—yet; but he'll have everything soon—don't you worry."

"Can we go around and see him now?" asked Singer, eagerly.

"It isn't necessary. I represent him."

"You!" exclaimed the advance agent, in astonishment.

"Yes. I've got the whole thing in hand."

"The deuce you say. Look here, Stanley, what's this you're giving me?"

"Straight goods."

"But I can't make arrangements with you. I want to know who I'm dealing with."

"Well, you're dealing with me."

"That won't do. I want some definite agreement about my money."

"You shall have it. Now listen: I'll offer you a contract, at forty dollars per week, you to pay your own expenses, transportation, of course, excepted. You're to remain here and act as business manager until the show is about ready to go out. You're to start in at once and secure as much of the open time of the late 'Golden Gulch' company as you can get. Where dates have been filled by another attraction, try some other town with a short jump. You'll help me arrange for the paper and the scenery and props. If we can get hold of some fairly good drapery that will do for the purposes of the drama until new scenery is painted, so much the better—we'll get out all the sooner."

"Say, Stanley, you are telling this story pretty well, but I've got to have a guarantee that I will get my salary."

"I'll get it for you. I'll have your contract made out and your salary guaranteed by a member of the Chicago Board of Trade."

Singer whistled.

"Say, Stanley, has Miss Price found an angel?"

"No, she hasn't," replied the boy, shortly.

"How about this book? Backing the show?"

"Mr. Singer, that needn't concern you at all. If you want this job, say so, and the contract will be ready for you to sign this afternoon."

"I'll take it."

"All right. Call around at the St. Charles Hotel at two o'clock."

"I'll do so. By the way, Stanley, how did you catch on to such a good thing? You seem to be managing the enterprise."

"I can't tell you to help me out. I want to give you a tip that will suit you best into the idea that I'm an expert. I know what I'm about. I may not be in the business just yet, but I know enough about it to tell whether you are or not the right thing or not. I wasn't six months in Mr. Bloodgood's office for nothing."

Singer grinned.

"If Miss Price didn't find the angel it is evident that you did. Take the advice of an old stager in the business—use him. When he's in the humor pull his leg good and hard. Let him understand that backing a show is an expensive luxury. If I was you I'd steer him alongside of Miss Price without loss of time. Should be able to lead him in the much better than you."

"Mr. Singer, I also owe Miss Price a favor from our business arrangements, and I'll do it in a professional way. You may as well understand the best and for all time that Miss Price is one of the best business women in the world, and I don't propose to use her as a decoy in an entirely unnecessary proceeding in this case, at any rate."

Singer took his cue, but still held on.

Stanley's alert mind had suddenly realized that there was nothing of a relation to him as commercial man.

Clearly there was a reservation in the lad that he had not fully realized.

"Now, Mr. Singer, I'd take it as a favor if you'd try and hunt up a suitable hall this morning for the company to rehearse in, and report to me at the hotel."

"I'll do it. In fact, I know of two or three places that will suit."

"Then secure the best one, and I'll see the proprietor later and close with him."

"All right," agreed the advance man, and the interview ended.

Stanley, who had consulted with Eva as to the people needed, went to a booking agency and had a talk with the agent.

The man had enough talent on his books to make up the company, but he could not say that he could reach all of them.

"Several haven't showed up lately, and may have got work," he said, "but I'll be able to get all you want in a few days."

Stanley paid him his retainer, and promised to be on hand on the following afternoon to meet the people and sign them for a season of thirty weeks.

The boy then went to a big show printing house and ordered his paper, the copy for which he and Eva had got up between them.

He also furnished the printer with rough sketches for his artist to make poster cuts for three of the most telling situations in the drama.

He paid a suitable deposit on the work, and arranged to have it delivered by express C. O. D. at the different towns along the company's route. A list of these, with dates for delivery, and quantity required at each town, he agreed to furnish later.

The printer had blank contract forms standing in type, and in half an hour furnished Stanley with all he needed, with his name inserted as the manager.

He filled out one with Mr. Singer's name, and took it down to Mr. Clarke's office and asked him as a favor to guarantee the salary, which the broker immediately did by indorsing it to that effect on the back.

At two o'clock Singer appeared at the Hotel St. Charles, and the contract was handed to him, with a duplicate, which he signed and which Stanley retained.

"I've got the hall for you," the advance man said, and he gave Stanley its name, location, and where the proprietor could be seen.

Stanley then furnished him with a list of the scenes and properties that were required, and told him to see about the matter without loss of time.

"Make the best prices you can, and get second-hand stuff that is available, if possible. First of all, however, go down to the Chicago Printing Company, get some of my letter-heads, which will be ready by four o'clock, and send out at once your applications for dates along the 'Golden Gulch' route. As soon as the company gets into harness you will arrange with the railroad company for transportation for twelve people at the usual professional rates. That's all for the present. You had better attend to the routing of the show at once—it will take a little time."

Singer left the hotel with the consciousness that Stanley meant business from his head down, and that John Bloodgood could not have started things off much better.

CHAPTER XV.

STANLEY'S PLAY STARTS WITH A PACKED HOUSE.

After Singer left the hotel Stanley took the manuscript of his play to the office of a public stenographer accustomed to dramatic copying, and left it with directions that he must have all the parts typewritten by noon on the following day.

This being guaranteed, he paid a deposit on the job and left.

He then returned to the hotel and spent the balance of the afternoon talking over the situation with Eva.

"I feel it in my bones, Stanley, that this play of yours will be a go," she said, "and that you'll make both fame and fortune out of it."

"Well, if things turn out the way you think, I shall owe it all to you, Eva."

"What makes you think so?" she asked smilingly.

"Because you'll be the whole show. People will go to see you—the play will be only a side issue," he answered.

"Nonsense!" she replied, laying her hand almost caressingly on his arm. "Your play has all the elements of success. It will attract the masses, while I will only cater to

them after you get them into the house. If I make a hit as Nugget Nell, it will be because you have furnished the means for me to display my ability."

"You are bound to make a hit, Eva. You did that in Miggles, and I believe that the part of Nugget Nell fits you much better."

"I'm sure that it does, and I'm going to play it for all I am worth, not only because I like the part, but for your sake, Stanley."

"Why particularly for my sake? Why not say for the sake of your professional reputation?"

"No, for your sake," she replied, looking at him with eyes that shone like diamonds. "Do you think that I ever can forget that it was to your pluck and strong arm I owe my life? What have I yet done to repay you for the risk you took that day in my behalf? Nothing. But now I see a chance to repay you by putting my very best efforts into Nugget Nell. I'll play that part as I never played a part before. I'll make the play a winner from the start-off, and I'll do it for you, and you only, Stanley."

"Eva," said the boy, taking her two hands in his and looking her straight in the eyes, "if anybody can make my play go it is you. You are very good to interest yourself so much in me. There, now, don't attempt to deny it. You say you've done nothing as yet for me. Why, haven't you helped and encouraged me with my drama? Haven't you assisted me in building it up from the first crude form in which I submitted it to you to something worth while? If I should happen by good luck to win fame and fortune out of it, is it not through you all this will come to me? Yes, through you, little girl. Then will not you promise to share with me that good luck? Fame and fortune is nothing to me, Eva, without you. If I only can win you, all the rest are but side issues. I love you, Eva. I've loved you ever since the moment I held you in my arms as we swung back and forth at the end of that rope in Le Brun's studio. I want you to be my wife some day when I'm able to take care of you. When that time comes, will you marry me?"

"Yes, Stanley, I will," replied the little actress, throwing her arms around his neck and looking her boy lover in the face, "for I love you with all my heart, with every fiber of my nature."

Then Stanley drew her to him and sealed their betrothal with the kiss of love.

That evening Stanley went to Mr. Torrens' boarding-house.

Tapping on the heavy man's door, he was bidden to enter.

"Marry, but you are welcome, Stanley," said the actor, who was reading a torn copy of "Hamlet." "I was reading over my old part that I played with Pooth. Prithee, is anything in the wind? You have the look of one that beareth intelligence."

"Do you want a job?" asked the boy, smiling.

"Do I want a job?" repeated the actor, dropping the play-book on the floor. "By my halidom, that is exactly what I do want. Dost know of any opening?"

"What salary do you want?"

"Don't ask me that. I'll go out for twenty dollars and my expenses, or I'll pay my own transportation excepted, for twenty-five dollars."

Stanley took a contract from his pocket, laid it on the table and filled in twenty-five dollars.

"Sign that, Mr. Torrens, and here is a tenner on account."

"Is it for the heavy leads, Stanley?" he asked, as he hastily took down an almost dried-out ink bottle and an antiquated pen from a shelf.

"Well, hardly. You're cast for first old man in the four-act Western melodrama of 'Nugget Nell.' I want you to do your best, Mr. Torrens, as I am the author of the play and manager of the company."

"You're what?" almost gasped the actor, pausing as he was about to affix his signature to the contract.

Stanley repeated his statement.

The heavy man expressed his astonishment, and then timidly asked the boy where the cash was coming from to put the venture on the road.

"One of Chicago's big grain brokers is backing me."

"Ha! Thou hast secured a most excellent angel. I congratulate thee, boy. It is a comforting reflection to perceive that the 'ghost' is likely to walk with some regularity."

"It will walk all right, Mr. Torrens, unless business gets uncommonly bad, which I hope won't happen."

*Among theatrical people the "ghost walks" when salaries are paid.

"Gadzooks! I hope not. There is your contract, and thanks most reverent and noble seignor, for the bill. Let us adjourn to the corner and quaff a cup of mead in honor of this momentous occasion. I hope that fame and fortune await thee on the road. Depend on it, I will do my best to reflect honor on my part. Where are the lines?"

"Call to-morrow at five at my hotel and you shall have the part."

"I will be there to the minute," replied Mr. Torrens. "When and where do we begin rehearsals?"

"At Michigan Hall, on Blank street, Monday morning at ten."

"It is well," and the actor rose and put on his hat.

Stanley excused himself from accompanying him to the corner, and walked back to the Gaiety Theater to wait for Eva.

On the following day Stanley went to the theatrical agent's office, where he met and signed most of the professional people he wanted for his company.

That afternoon Mr. Singer reported that he had found four sets of second-hand scenery that with slight alterations would fill the bill.

One or two set pieces would have to be built and painted, but the outfit would be ready for delivery at the close of the following week.

He had also secured all the necessary properties.

Stanley accompanied him to the storage house and put up the money demanded.

He was assured that everything would be ready at the time stated.

Mr. Singer said that he had written for all the dates made vacant by the stoppage of "Golden Gulch," and he expected that things would pan out all right so that they could take the road in a fortnight.

This suited Stanley all right.

On Monday morning the company gathered at Michigan Hall and Stanley read his play to them.

They all declared it to be a winner.

The man engaged to play the villain was an old stage manager, and Stanley gave him charge of the stage.

The rehearsals were conducted on the dancing floor of the hall, chairs and a table or two being made to represent certain set pieces that were in the play.

The leader of the Gaiety Theater arranged the music for Eva's songs and dances, and appeared at two of the rehearsals to put her through her paces, as well as to familiarize the company with the music cues.

He wrote out the necessary orchestral parts for all the incidental music, as well as Eva's music.

Singer got most all the dates of the late "Golden Gulch" company, and left Chicago for the first town on their route on Thursday of the second week.

On Friday evening Stanley got the following telegram from him:

"Geneva, Ill., Sept. 28.

"MR. STANLEY HOPE.

"St. Charles Hotel, Chicago, Ill.

"Town well billed. You're in great luck. Political convention here on Monday afternoon. Town will be full of strangers. They'll want to go somewhere. Even a cat-and-dog show will pack them to the doors.

"WILLIAM L. SINGER."

Stanley showed the dispatch to Eva.

"That's a good omen, Stanley," she said, with a happy smile. "It will be S. R. O., without a doubt."

"I hope so," he answered, with a pleased smile, taking her lovely face between his two hands and kissing her pouting lips. "Nugget Nell, you are the golden nugget out of which my fame and fortune will spring."

"You mean our fame and fortune, Stanley," she said softly.

The final rehearsal was held on Sunday at the hall, and on Monday morning the company started for Geneva.

No special car was required for the scenery, properties and baggage of "Nugget Nell."

It was loaded aboard of the regular baggage car, and duly put off on the platform at Geneva when the train reached the station, where a transfer wagon was in waiting to carry it to the Opera House.

The company all went to the same hotel, and after dinner a rehearsal was called at the theater to familiarize the people with the scenery and appointments of the play.

The leader of the orchestra had been sent for to take charge

of the music and make himself acquainted with his part of the show.

Stanley found the most encouraging prospects at the box office, for two-thirds of the house had been sold, and the local manager assured him that the theater would be packed to the doors.

And so it proved.

Even standing room was at a premium when the curtain rose on the first act of "Nugget Nell" on its opening night.

CHAPTER XVI.

EVA SCORES A TRIUMPH IN NUGGET NELL.

The interior of the theater that night presented an encouraging and exhilarating sight not only to the performers, but to the young author whose first play was about to receive its initial performance.

Eva Price was bubbling over with delight and enthusiasm, for she was as much interested in the success of the play as was Stanley.

Although the front of the house required the boy's presence as manager of the show in order to protect his interests, he managed to go inside and witness Eva's whirlwind entrance soon after the curtain went up.

After the first act was well under way, and Eva was carrying the audience with her as Nugget Nell, Stanley accompanied the local manager to the box office to count up the receipts.

"I haven't had such a house since last Christmas night, when the 'Wizard of Oz' was here," said the manager, beamingly.

"The paid admissions amount to eight hundred and ninety-eight dollars," he said, when the statement had been prepared and footed up.

"Of which I get sixty-five per cent," replied Stanley.

"Exactly, less, of course, my billboard charges, and an I. O. U. from Mr. Singer for ten dollars. The other bills will be in about nine o'clock. Your advance man contracted for a special advertisement in to-day's paper, and for a wagon and transparency to parade the town this afternoon."

After all bills had been settled, Stanley tucked away something like five hundred and fifty dollars in his clothes, and then went back on the stage.

The first act was over and the men folks were coming out to "see a man."

Eva assured Stanley that the first act had gone off as smooth as silk, while the stage manager and other performers gathered around and congratulated him on his auspicious start.

"Gadzooks!" exclaimed Mr. Torrens, who was made up as an old miner—the father of Nugget Nell. "This puts me in mind of when I played with Booth. Ah, he could draw a house. The drama is not what it was."

"I'm sorry that I couldn't give you a better part, Mr. Torrens, but—"

"Say no more, Stanley. I am quite satisfied to do my best in anything for you. I mean to do thee full justice for my five-and-twenty per. Once, you will remember, the vampire called me rotten. Methinks it was an unkind remark," said the old actor, shaking his head in a melancholy way. "Thou shalt have no cause to repeat the expression to my disadvantage. To-night I feel the old fire in my bones. Perchance were the vampire here he might regret casting me off like an old shoe."

Stanley wormed his way into the crowded auditorium to catch a glimpse of the second act.

It was in this act that Eva introduced her most attractive specialty, and it caught on like wildfire.

The audience, two-thirds of which was composed of men, went into ecstasies over her singing and dancing.

She was recalled again and again, until she had to beg off.

Every time she appeared on the stage she was applauded, and there was not any doubt but she was the show.

"Why, that soubrette of yours has every other one I've seen skinned to death," remarked the local manager to Stanley. "Where did you get her?"

"In New York," he replied. "She was one of the hits of 'Mademoiselle Bonbon' at the Lyric."

"You must pay her big money, otherwise I don't see how you can hold her."

"I can hold her, all right," answered Stanley, with a confident smile.

"That's you're likely. It pays, I guess, to carry a good thing

along. It pulls the business every time. I'd like to give you a return date."

"Not this season, Mr. Bradley."

The play went on with great satisfaction to the spectators.

All the other performers acquitted themselves fairly well for a first night in a new piece; even the ancient Mr. Torrens was distinctly good as the poor old drunken father of the heroine.

Eva made her biggest hit, as Stanley expected she would, at the close of the third act, when she played the villain a game of poker for the Poker Flat mining claim, as we described in Chapter VII.

The entire sympathy of the house was with her in the game.

When the villain laughed and raised her ten thousand dollars—all she had—by fifty thousand dollars, the price he valued the claim at, a storm of hisses burst from the gallery, and even from the orchestra seats.

When the lover then stepped forward and handed her the deed of the Little Nugget mine of Nevada to help her out, the house fairly shook with enthusiasm.

"And I place it against that Poker Flat claim and call him," cried Nell, amid a perfect furore of enthusiasm.

Amid a breathless hush the villain showed up his four kings.

Then Nugget Nell sprang to her feet and held up the four aces so that half the audience could distinguish them.

The roar of excitement that went up from the audience was for a moment simply terrific.

You would have thought the house was on fire, or that a riot was in progress.

Then when the villain pulled his bowie-knife on her she covered him with a brace of revolvers, saying, "And a pair of sixes!" the spectators went wild with satisfaction.

Of course Eva had to come before the curtain, which she did, holding onto the hand of her stage lover, and the house rose to her, as the saying is.

After that the villain walked on, and what the gallery didn't do to him isn't worth mentioning.

CHAPTER XVII.

FAME AND FORTUNE.

After the performance was over and the actors had resumed their every-day garb, they returned to the Geneva House, where a cold lunch was awaiting them, served by the proprietor of the hotel without extra charge to his theatrical patrons after the show as a means of encouraging professional trade.

The supper was heartily enjoyed by the company.

The champagne was evidently a luxury to which most of them were strangers.

It loosened up their tongues and polished up their wits, so that all became very merry before the meal was half over.

"I notice that you are not drinking, Mr. Hope," said Frank Harding, the leading juvenile, who enacted the part of the lover in the play.

"I never drink, Mr. Harding," replied the young manager, with a smile.

At this point Talbot Torrens rose to his feet and asked for silence.

"My professional friends, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that we are all agreed that our young manager, Stanley Hope, who is also the author of the piece, has this evening secured for us an artistic and financial triumph," he began.

"Hear, hear!" cried Mr. McKean, the heavy man.

"I have had the honor of Mr. Hope's acquaintance for several months, and it gives me great pleasure to say that I have always found him to be a good friend to his professional brother."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the comedian.

"I therefore propose Stanley Hope's health, and may he win fame and fortune before the end of this season."

The laugh was distinctly drunk. Eva and Stanley participating with a glass of water.

"Ladies and gentlemen," reported Stanley, rising, "I thank you for your congratulations and good wishes, and can only say that I trust to deserve a conformance of the same. The play tonight has certainly been a success, but its success, I need scarcely say, is wholly due to the magnetic abilities of Miss Eva—Miss Vance, or, as we know her, Eva Price."

"That's right," added one of the company.

Soon afterward the supply of wine gave out and the supper party broke up.

The next night the company played at Aurora to a fair-sized house, which waxed enthusiastic over the star and the piece.

Wednesday night they showed in York to a satisfactory house, after which came Ottawa and Streator, and on Saturday night "Nugget Nell" drew a record crowd at Peoria.

The last three nights of the succeeding week they drew big houses at Springfield, the capital of the State, and from there went straight to St. Louis, where they had a week stand.

At the end of the eighth week the boy, who had sent encouraging reports of his tour to Mr. Clarke, the Chicago broker, forwarded to that gentleman every cent he had received from him in backing the company at the outset.

After that good luck continued to follow the "Nugget Nell" company wherever it showed, and Stanley's money barrel filled rapidly.

The "Golden Gulch" organization had secured time at both the West End and New Star Theaters in New York to wind up the season.

Mr. Singer, however, failed to recover it for the "Nugget Nell" company, so it looked as if the organization would have to close at the end of the twenty-eighth week, unless he could fill in somewhere else.

It happened that the day he reached New York he heard that an attraction holding four weeks at the Fourteenth Street Theater had come to grief, and he lost no time in bracing the New York manager for an opening.

He probably would not have succeeded, as the manager had his eyes on another attraction, but for the fact that he mentioned the great success Evangeline Vance was making in his own show.

The fact that this metropolitan favorite of the previous season was heading the "Nugget Nell" company brought the New York manager to terms at once, and Singer got the time.

He immediately wired the news to Stanley, and there was great joy in the "Nugget Nell" combination.

The company duly reached New York and appeared at the Fourteenth Street Theater on Monday night.

Stanley and Eva were, of course, joyfully welcomed at the little flat in Harlem, where they were both at home once more.

Tuesday morning's papers praised Eva to the skies, and spoke very handsomely about "Nugget Nell."

On Wednesday, Stanley astonished Mr. Bloodgood, as well as Miss Anderson, by walking into the office looking like a young aristocrat.

"Well, Mr. Bloodgood, I've made a barrel of money out of the play you turned down. 'Nugget Nell' and Eva Price just pulled the people in ever since we left Chicago. Now we're playing to S. R. O. at the Fourteenth Street Theater, and I'm willing to bet that we'll have the biggest four weeks' receipts of the season there."

"Nugget Nell" was such a success that the four weeks were extended to eight, and the company and the house both closed the season together.

With one or two changes, Stanley took out the same company, with brand-new scenery and splendid paper, the next season, and his success was more pronounced, for he secured time at leading cities from the Atlantic to the Missouri River.

He made a raft of money on this tour, and when he got back to New York at the close of the season he was besieged by several managers to write a play for them, but declined with thanks.

One of these managers was John Bloodgood.

Before Stanley and Eva went on their vacation they were quietly married at the Little Church Around the Corner, and three days later left for a trip to Europe on one of the big liners.

Although only twenty, Stanley had practically won fame as a dramatist, and actually won a fortune as the manager of his own company.

Next week's issue will contain "A WALL STREET WINNER; OR, MAKING A MINT OF MONEY."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

It was not to be believed at many points in Southern California the remarkable spectacle of orange trees mantled with snow. It was a scene which had not been witnessed in years, but temperatures did not range below 32 degrees, and the orange crops suffered no damage.

The army and navy football game this year will be played in Philadelphia, it was definitely announced recently, but it may not be contested on Franklin Field. Philadelphians contemplate building a stadium capable of seating 50,000 persons, and if this project is carried out, an effort will be made to transfer this annual contest to the stadium permanently.

The suit for \$500 damages for the loss of five eyelashes which Miss Julia Perubsky, of 125 Prospect avenue, Bayonne, started against the Central Railroad of New Jersey, was settled, when Miss Perubsky agreed to accept \$200. She said that hot cinders from a passing express train singed her eyelashes while she awaited a train at the East Twenty-second Street Station in Bayonne, N. J.

Eluding three watchmen, a thief gained entrance to the Art Institute of Chicago recently and escaped with rare jewels, valued at \$50,000. The collection was the gift of La Verne W. Noyes, a Chicago manufacturer, in memory of his wife. It was made up of five pieces, all of ancient French make. It included a necklace of diamonds and opals, a brooch of diamonds, earrings, a watch, buckle and pendant of opals. Entrance was gained through a skylight on the roof of the building.

It is probable that at an early date the oil produced from the shale deposits in the Gladstone district of Queensland will be available. The particular area on which the operations are being conducted is in the neighborhood of Lowmead, near Baffle Creek, in the Gladstone district. Bores are now being sunk for a company which has leased the land. At 173 feet in one bore a thick bed of shale was penetrated. An American company has offered to build a plant for recovering crude oil from shale.

Baron Cederstrom, director of the Swedish Government airplane factory at Soedertelge, is credited with a brief statement concerning German battleplanes of gigantic proportions which he examined while visiting aviation centers in Germany. The new battleplanes are said to be three times the size of the ordinary Albatross type, with tremendous lifting power, great stability, high speed, and carry an unprecedented weight of armor, armament, fuel and provisions, together with a large crew. It is further stated that the craft is steered from the bridge, like a steamer.

On Jan. 17, 1916, in the Freehold, N. J., courthouse, N. J., in a \$1,000 action, it was claimed that on

Sept. 27 of that year, loss was sustained to \$500.00. The owner, if there be one, is invited to call and prove his claim. George B. Norris, of 43 Union street, Jersey City, who was appointed administrator of the Coyle estate on Jan. 20, 1915, has begun a suit in the Supreme Court for disbursement of the funds. He has been unable to find any lawful claimant. If a lawful heir does not appear the estate will go to Jersey City.

The University of Chicago baseball team returned to Chicago the other day after a trip through the Orient of more than 10,000 miles. The athletes reported that baseball is growing more popular than ever in Japan. They said the Japanese have developed the habit of baiting the umpires and that they refuse to support a losing team, much after the manner of American followers of the game. The inability of the native teams to defeat the Americans caused a great decrease in the attendance, it was said. The Waseda University team is expected to play in the United States this year. In the Philippines there is much enthusiasm over baseball, though Americans make up most of the better teams, it was said. Best seats sell in Manila for \$1.50.

Coroner Livingston, of New Rochelle, N. Y., decided that Mrs. Sarah Heckler, a widow, of Mamaroneck, who was found in a shack with diamonds and bank books worth \$50,000, had died from pneumonia brought on by privation. Mrs. Heckler, widow of Capt. Frank Heckler, a veteran of the Union army, lived alone in a little hovel at Weaver and Palmer avenues, and deprived herself of the necessities of life that she might deposit in a savings bank the rent she received from a big country house she owned near by. Mrs. Heckler had been collecting a pension of \$29 a month, which she deposited regularly in a Mamaroneck bank. Coroner Livingston said: "When I saw the body it was nothing but a skeleton. She must have practically starved herself."

America's first naval airship is nearing completion at the factory of an aircraft manufacturing plant in Connecticut. According to the final specifications, the airship is to be 175 feet long, its maximum height 50 feet, and its greatest beam 35 feet. Where the fins are attached, the beam is increased to 50 feet. The volume of the envelope is 11,000 cubic feet, while each balloonette is to have a capacity of 15,000 cubic feet. The weight of the envelope is to be 15,000 pounds. The dead weight of the machine is specified as 4,000 pounds, while the lifting power is 7,800 pounds, leaving the carrying capacity in the neighborhood of 3,800 pounds of useful load. The dirigible is to be driven by a 150-horse-power motor through two four-bladed propellers. The maximum speed is specified at between 25 and 35 miles an hour, which can be maintained for a period of five hours. The dirigible is to be capable of rising to a height of 5,000 feet.

MAX AND HIS MILLION

— OR —

WORKING FOR THE WIZARD OF WALL STREET

By ED KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER II.

MAX GETS A TIP.

He took the "wait" sign off the door, closed it, and knocked three times on the panel again.

And all this was a fair sample of Max's daily calls—five days in the week, for on Saturdays there was nothing doing at the Wizard's shop.

At the risk of growing dull, we must dwell a little longer upon the peculiarities of Max's job, for it is on the events of that morning that our story hangs.

Max's day was usually over at twelve o'clock, for the Wizard never gave his stock tips in the afternoon.

Ordinarily he declined to receive more than three or four persons of a morning. There were four in the office now, and one just gone.

That all would not be successful, Max well knew.

Perhaps none would be; he could not tell.

And did Max believe in the alleged power of his markable employer?

He neither believed nor disbelieved. He simply as yet not understand the situation.

He had seen Jabez Coloney turn from a millionaire to a pauper, and the next instant become a millionaire again.

The fee was invariably \$500. To this, however, he offered him more in good faith, as Ebstein had done, he gave one warning. If the offer of more money was repeated that ended the client. He was never admitted again.

If the offer was made in anything like a proper way, Coloney usually flew into a rage and ordered the man out of his office.

Max's knock on the panel was followed by a short five minutes.

Then the Wizard looked out.

The broker stepped forward and stepped to Max's side, in front of the panel, and said, in a whisper, "I'm not here this morning."

"I'm the broker, sir," said Max, crossing forward. "I was recommended to you by Mr. Duson. I—er—"

"No," cried the Wizard.

Max stepped back in amazement.

"Wait," said the Wizard, pointing his long, lean forefinger at the other man.

Then the panel closed.

"Well, upon my word!" exclaimed the first man, bursting with rage. "I never received such ungentlemanly

treatment in my life. Take in my card, young man. I am J. J. Somers, the Boston banker. I have particular business with Mr. Coloney. I—er—"

"It's no use, sir," said Max. "Please go!"

"What?"

"I can't see you, sir. I can't take your card. Please go!"

"What insolence!" stammered the banker. "Let me follow look out for himself. I'll expose this fraud yet."

He went out and slammed the door, while the two old-timers sat smiling on their chairs.

One was Mr. Sanderson, Susie Smith's employer.

The Wizard did not always receive him, but he did sometimes, and Max knew him perfectly well; but whether the Wizard would consent to receive him on that particular morning or not he had no more knowledge than the man in the moon.

"Sit down, sir," he said to the other gentleman, who was a person altogether out of the ordinary line of the Wizard's customers, whom we shall describe later.

"Thank you, Mr. Sanderson," said Max.

The broker arose and walked to the panel.

Max gave the knock.

The panel opened, and the Wizard's head popped out. This time it was neither yes nor no.

He looked at the broker fixedly for a moment and then said:

"Step in, Max!"

The Wizard never received a client alone. Max was always present.

"I'm afraid I'm late this time," muttered Sanderson.

The door opened and he followed Max in, but he knew the Wizard too well to say a word.

Jabez Coloney received him standing.

"I'm not here all day this morning," he said, passing his hand over his bald head. It was one of the singularities that he never addressed a client by name. "Just wait a minute. Perhaps I can advise you. At heart you are a good man, but you are allowing yourself to grow proud as you grow richer, and you are dropping into the careless ways of those who make money their god. Give me your hand."

Parker Sanderson flushed and extended his hand.

"Yes, yes!" said the Wizard. "I—er—Pay your debts and then come again."

"Mr. Coloney?" stammered the broker.

"Are you deaf? Don't you hear?" shouted the Wizard. "Pay your debts and come again."

Max was ready to explode as he threw open the door.

"Susie is all right now," he thought. "By thunder, old Sanderson got it in the neck for fair."

The broker's face was as red as a beet as he hurried out of the office.

We may as well mention right here that Max afterward learned from Susie that the office employees were paid in full within half an hour's time.

The next client was a curbstone broker, whose clients on the Street were very small.

He got an interview, but it was a brief one.

Apparently asleep on the lounge as before, holding Max's hand while Max clutched that of the broker, the Wizard rattled off no stock quotations, but said "questions" at the very start.

"I have five thousand placed in my hands by a widow," said the curbstone broker. "I want to do my best for her. How shall I invest it, please?"

There was silence for some minutes.

Then the Wizard, mentioning a certain stock, said, "Buy at 92."

That ended the interview.

The Wizard awoke and, receiving his five dollars, returned to his book, saying:

"Max, don't knock for half an hour. I shall receive only the man who waits."

"Is it my turn next?" asked the gentleman when the broker had departed.

"The boss says half an hour, sir," replied Max, respectfully. "You will have to wait."

"All right," said the man. "I'll wait all day if necessary. I was recommended here by a feller in 'Frisco. Jim Allen—know him?"

"No," said Max. "We don't ask names here."

"So Jim was telling me," said the man, who was a round-looking fellow, flashily dressed.

"Say," he added, "I'm just back from the Klondike with something of a war. I have a notion to take a flyer in stocks; that's why I want the tip. Jim told me this man Coloney is a wonder, and that his tips never fail. That so?"

"Sometimes they do fail," said Max, in a whisper, for he knew that the panel was liable to fly open at any instant, bringing an order for him to "shut his mouth."

"But you had better not talk here," he added. "He don't like it. He's the strangest man you ever saw."

"That puts the stopper on me," returned the Klondiker in a sepulchral whisper. "I was only going to say that I don't know why I should want to make any more money than I've got, for I hain't got a friend or relation on earth to leave it to."

Max had done talking, and made no reply, and the return Klondiker, thus choked off, remained silent.

The half hour was just up when the panel was opened again, and out popped the Wizard's shaggy head.

"Now!" he said, and his head popped in again.

The door opened and Max and his Klondiker entered just in time to see Coloney throw himself down upon the lounge.

It was some moments before he spoke. Then he held out his hand, saying, "Ready."

Max took the stranger's hand, and after another brief wait the Wizard spoke.

"Max!"

"Yes, sir."

"Strange! I can't get beyond you."

"Sir?"

"Sir! Max, in two months you will be worth a million. You, man from the Klondike, in one year you will be worth a million and over. Go."

Max's heart gave a great bound.

For two years he had been working for the Wizard of Wall Street.

This was the first time he had ever received a tip.

CHAPTER III.

MAX MAKES A FIND.

The interview between the Wizard and the Klondikeer ended right here.

The man from up the Yukon way did not take kindly to this sort of a seance.

As the Wizard roused up, rubbing his eyes as usual, the big miner eyed him with manifest disgust.

"Say, is that all?" he asked.

"You have got out of me all you are going to get, my friend," replied Jabez Coloney, in his abrupt way.

"Huh! That so? What's the damage?"

"My fee is five dollars. If you feel that you can't afford that, then nothing at all."

"Oh, I can afford five dollars all right, and I'm a-going to give it to you because I don't want to get into no trouble my first day in York; but I want to say right here this is the blampedest fraud I ever run up against, and you're the biggest fakir I ever see."

Max expected to see the Wizard fly into one of his rages—something which often occurred.

It did not occur now, however.

Coloney looked the man over from head to foot.

"You have a kind heart," he said mildly. "You have worked hard and want to be good with your money. Perhaps I am a fraud and a fakir. I don't know. Sometimes I think I may be. Keep your five dollars, friend, and give it to the first poor man you meet."

"No, no," said the Klondiker, gruffly. "I came here with my eyes wide open. I've took up your time. Here's your pay."

He threw the five-dollar bill on the desk, and stalked out of the office, slamming both doors behind him.

The Wizard took up the bill and handed it to Max.

"Take it," he said.

Max did so. He had learned to obey this man without question.

"Not for yourself," added Coloney. "If you know any poor person who needs money give him the bill."

"I know just the person, Mr. Coloney," said Max.

"That is true. I can read it in your face. It is a woman. Give her the bill. No more to-day, Max. I'm tired of this business. It may be no more ever."

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

PANAMA CANAL TO REOPEN.

The Panama Canal, which has been closed since September 18 by the worst slide in its history, will be opened again for the passage of vessels drawing less than twenty feet of water, when ten ships, three from the Atlantic end and seven from the Pacific end, are to go through.

Exceptional progress, aided by good weather conditions, enabled the canal engineers and dredge men to upset the prediction that the canal would not again be opened to traffic before next spring. Providing that no further earth slides occur, the canal will be ready for the transit of vessels of all drafts shortly after the first of the year.

BOY MAKES MONEY OUT OF SHEEP.

Gerald Pershin, fourteen years of age, of Ipswich, S. Dak., gives promise of being one of the financiers of the country.

On Sept. 5, 1914, the boy went to M. A. Slocum, a friend, and told him that he had a chance to buy twenty-five old ewes from Robert Jones at a bargain. Mr. Slocum went with the boy to the bank and signed a note with him, thereby enabling the boy to get the funds.

Recently the boy entered the bank, paid over \$83.60, his note with interest, and remarked that he had cleaned up \$110.80 clean profit on his sheep during the year. He had sold \$28 worth of wool and had sold his original purchase and their increase, less five sheep the coyotes had killed, for \$166.40.

BAY STATE'S POPULATION.

The population of Massachusetts was 3,693,310 on April 1, 1915, according to the official announcement the other day of the census taken by the State Bureau of Statistics. The total, which probably keeps the State in sixth place in population rank, is greater by 326,894 than the count made in the Federal census of five years ago.

Massachusetts shelters approximately 450 persons to the square mile, the figures show, and is second only to Rhode Island in density of population.

Boston's population is 745,133, as compared with 670,585 five years ago. The metropolitan district, within ten miles of City Hall numbers 1,581,093 persons. Worcester held its place as the second city of the State, its population being 162,697. Fall River remains third, with 124,091, but Lowell, which was fourth, is now sixth, displaced by New Bedford, which passed the 100,000 mark for the first time. The population of the latter city is 109,568; that of Cambridge, still in fifth position, 108,822, and Lowell, 107,978. Springfield, moving from eighth place to seventh in rank, entered the 100,000 division with a total of 102,971.

SOMERSAULTS OVER HOG.

Many complaints are heard regarding the actions of "road hogs" of the human type, but it remained for Miss Marie Hutchinson of Van Nuys to have a disastrous en-

counter with the real article on the State Highway, near Marian, Cal.

The young lady was driving a car, accompanied by her father, C. M. Hutchinson. They left home before daybreak, planning to spend the day with friends in Nordhoff. As the machine sped swiftly along the smooth road there suddenly loomed upon the startled vision of the fair young driver a huge black hog, only a few feet ahead.

It was impossible to stop in time to avoid a collision, so a sharp turn to the left was made. Miss Hutchinson misjudged the size of the beast, which was struck in the head, and the next instant the auto turned a complete somersault endwise, then rolled over on its side in the ditch.

Mr. Hutchinson and his daughter were badly bruised, but escaped serious injury. The force of the impact tore the radiator from the car, demolished one wheel and broke several minor parts.

A HARD WINTER.

They have all sorts of sharps at the Hippodrome, amateur and professional, and one of them makes a specialty of weather. After a tour through Central Park and the Bronx in search of weather symptoms, William Stewart sent the following report to Charles B. Dillingham:

"I didn't need any Government weather man holding down a padded swivel chair and \$5,000 a year to tell me it was going to be a hard winter. I felt it all along. And I have had bunches of that kind for so many years I trust 'em, as a boy does his grandad. Maybe it was my long training out on the Western prairies, where the weather for you New Yorkers is made, or maybe it's my rheumatic knee.

"The Government reports from all over the country say we are to have a very severe winter. Why? Because the infallible signs of nature are hung up all over the face of the earth. Any dub who knows the woods and the wild creatures knows that they have the weather all figured out long before it comes to them.

"Persimmon crop is very large this fall. That always means a hard winter. There are more acorns and locusts than usual. That always means a hard winter. You must have noticed yourself how very thick and hard the skins of the apples are this fall. That always means a hard winter. I noticed up in the Bronx the other Sunday that the hornets have hung their nests very high this fall. That's so as to be out of reach of the deep snows which their strange instinct tells them will be very deep this winter.

"The muskrats' nests over on the Jersey meadows and along the Hackensack River are unusually high. Don't know that I ever saw them so high. It tells the same story. Any market man will tell you that the breastbone of the goose is thicker and tougher this fall than it has been for a good many years, and the goose doesn't get fooled when it comes to anticipating weather in bunches."

Young Fresh from 'Frisco

— OR —

THE BOY WHO BOSSED THE MINE

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XVIII (continued)

The superintendent of the milling company was very respectful over the phone.

He informed Jack that he had called up Mr. Sypher, and now that he understood matters he should be pleased to attend to any business he might send him.

Things were beginning to work more smoothly.

Jack now proceeded to interview the proprietor of the boarding-house—Mr. Carls.

He found the man very respectful, and anxious to get over on the winning side.

He explained his methods of doing business to Jack, and on request exhibited his contract with the company.

Jack informed him that everything would go on without change for the present, and the dinner sent over to the office for himself and Arthur showed that Mr. Carls was anxious to please.

After dinner Jack overhauled the safe.

There was one little iron door to which Arthur had no key.

Jack sent for the machinist, and had it opened by hammer and cold-chisel.

The result proved highly satisfactory, for inside were found accurate reports of the amount of ore mined during the past two months.

These, upon being compared with the returns on Arthur's books, showed a shortage of twenty per cent. in each case.

This proved Barnacle a man of method.

His stealings had been regular each day.

Arthur was jubilant. He regarded the battle as having been fought and won, and positively declined to have a second.

Not so with Jack. His mind was full of trouble, the man in just what form it was likely to come he could, of course, only guess.

For all these thoughts were put out of Jack's head by the events of the afternoon.

It was just about three o'clock, when an unusually heavy blast was fired in shaft No. 2.

It should be understood that a bottle of ink was upon Arthur's desk.

A few moments later Jack, looking out of the window, saw a crowd gathered around the shafthouse.

"What's the matter, Arthur?" he cried, holding his hat.

"Yes; lock the safe and come along!" cried Jack, dash ing out of the door.

Quite a little crowd had gathered around the shafthouse when Jack reached it.

Dolph Tatum was not there, as he was engaged at the bottom of shaft No. 1.

"What's the matter?" demanded Jack of a man who was peering down into the shaft.

"It was a big blast, sir," replied the man. "Tim must have hit the cap on one of the cartridges some way. Of course, he is dead."

"Brown, the foreman?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anybody else down there with him?"

"Nobody else, sir. Tim always sets the charge himself."

"He is supposed to come up and fire it, too."

"Yes, sir. He'll never come up out of that again, though."

"What's the depth here?"

"Two hundred and sixty feet."

"Some one must get down there to him at once."

"We have lowered two men in the ore tub," was the reply. "We shall hear from them in a minute. Will you take the telephone, sir? I was just going to when you came."

It should be mentioned that High Rock mine was fitted up with every modern appliance.

Not only were they on the general circuit, which connects all mines of importance in Northern California with San Francisco, but there were special wires between the office and the bottom of each shaft, with connections in the shafthouses as well.

Jack, who had posted himself in all this, hurried to the phone and rang up the bottom of the shaft.

"Brown is all right! Start the blower, for heaven's sake!" he cried, and which he called out to the men behind him.

"Something wrong!" cried Alf Cowly, the man with whom he had been speaking. "The blower has been running ever since the blast was fired."

"The blower is running," Jack called down.

This time there was no answer, although Jack called again and again.

"I can't make them hear!" he exclaimed, turning to the men. "Something must be wrong with the wire, I guess."

"I'll get it," he said.

"Cut that wire, boy," he said. "It's the blower. A

hole must have been busted in the air-box by a piece of flying rock."

"Good heavens!" cried Jack. "What's to come of that?"

"Death, I reckon, sir," replied Cowly. "I don't see how any one can save them now."

"But can't some one go down and stop the leak? Why are you all standing around so? Why don't you do something?" cried Jack, getting pretty well worked up now.

"It can't be done, sir," said Cowley. "It is as much as a man's life is worth. Yet it wouldn't take two minutes to nail a bit of board over the hole, likely enough."

Jack had been down into No. 2 at the time Barnacle showed him the mine, and his retentive memory had held every detail of the arrangement of the condition of things in the shaft.

On the instant it flashed into his mind that here was his chance. If he could do this thing which none of these men dared to do, his influence over them would be established forever.

For a single instant only Jack hesitated.

"I'll go down," he said then. "Cowly, get the board, the hammer and nails. Haul up the tub. Get me a lantern. I'll tackle the shaft."

"Boss, you can never do it!" cried Cowly, and others said the same thing.

"Do as I tell you!" said Jack. "I am boss here, and intend to be obeyed. If no one else will go down into No. 2, then I will. Get things ready quickly."

He flew back to the telephone and rang the bell furiously.

There was no answer when he called.

As he turned away he saw that the hoistman had started his engine, and the tub rope was winding rapidly around the drum.

Cowly soon appeared with the desired articles, and again cautioned Jack.

Meanwhile Arthur had come and was vigorously protesting.

"Don't bother me!" cried Jack. "When I start in to do a thing I like to finish it. I said I was going down there, and down I am going. Here, Arthur, tie this wet handkerchief over my mouth and nose. Quick. There are three dying men down there."

And Jack had his way.

It was useless to try to stop him.

Stepping into the tub, he calmly gave the order to "lower away."

Arthur never expected to see him alive again, nor, it is safe to say, did any man of all those who pressed about the shafthouse.

Meanwhile some one had telephoned down to Dolph Tatum in No. 1.

The new superintendent appeared upon the scene just as Jack started down in the tub.

"It is madness!" he cried when Cowly explained the situation. "Haul him up at once until the smoke and gas work out of that shaft; no man can go down there and come out alive."

"I'm obeying orders," said Cowly. "I don't think anybody had better interfere."

Jack had ordered that the tub be lowered slowly so that

he could get a chance to examine the blower box for the leak.

Now the rope was violently shaken.

"Hold on!" cried Cowly.

This was the signal.

Jack had found the hole.

"It won't do to interfere with that fellow," said Cowly emphatically. "Don't bother, Dolph. The boy is bound to boss the mine, and the only thing is to let him have his way."

CHAPTER XIX.

JACK'S BRAVE DEED.

Jack had done a brave deed—braver than he knew.

He had taken a risk which few experienced miners ever dare to assume.

Perhaps if he had known his business better he would have been less bold.

From the first something seemed to tell him that he would succeed.

The wet handkerchief tied tight over his face assisted him greatly in his breathing.

Another thing was helping him.

The blower, which was still working, was steadily forcing air down into the hole.

Although much escaped through the break, some was forced down to the bottom of the shaft, and the foul gases were now on the rise.

When Jack struck the break in the blower box he had, without knowing it, actually passed through the worst of his danger.

The break was about twenty feet up from the bottom.

A sharp fragment of rock from the blast at the bottom of the shaft had forced its way through the side of the box, making a hole about as big as a man's head.

The atmosphere was terribly heavy, and Jack's head was reeling, but still he had not the least notion of giving up.

Giving the signal, the tub was brought to a standstill. Jack could just reach the box and no more.

But this was enough.

Pressing the piece of board against the break, he nailed it securely into place.

Now he felt safe. He knew that in a very few minutes the air of the shaft would become pure and clear.

Again he shook the rope, this time twice.

It was the signal to "lower away."

A moment later the bucket struck the rough top of blasted rock at the bottom of the shaft.

Here the air had now become quite clear, for pure California oxygen was being pumped in through the blower at a rapid rate.

The two men who had gone down to the aid of the foreman were there.

One lay on the rocks entirely unconscious. The other was sitting down with his face buried in his hands.

Tim Brown, the foreman, was nowhere to be seen.

"Up, man! Up! Plenty of pure air here now," cried Jack, pushing back the fellow's head. "Give yourself a chance to breath!"

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

F. I. Gahn, of Rich Township, is perhaps the biggest country schoolboy in Ohio if not in the United States. He is sixteen years of age and weighs 260 pounds. Gahn attends the Glaser School, north of Fremont, Ohio, and is one of the brightest pupils in his class.

Miami, Fla., will hold a winter tennis tournament this year which, it is expected, will attract many of the best players of the country. T. R. Pell will be one of the contestants. Carl C. Fisher, of Indianapolis, has offered a challenge cup which becomes the permanent property of the contestant winning it three times.

In spite of war conditions there is considerable building being carried on in Naples. Apartment houses are being erected in the Vomero, Piedegrotto, Torretto and other sections, one of the finest being in course of erection near the center of the city on the reclaimed ground to the south of Santa Lucia. The contracts for these works, however, were all let before the European hostilities began.

J. V. Young, formerly treasurer of the Rush County Fair Association, Rushville, Ind., has received a letter from an Indianapolis man, whose name was not made public, inclosing thirty cents conscience money. The man said he, as a lad, stole into the Rush County fair 20 years ago, and that he wanted to relieve his mind of the act. The admission to the fair was twenty-five cents. He added five cents as interest.

A drowsy state after meals is what we should welcome, for it is the most favorable condition for good digestion. Nutmegs may produce it because their effect is to increase the flow of gastric juice. The nutmeg is much used by doctors as a remedy in weak digestion. If one has a keen appetite he does not need nutmeg, for appetite is the most powerful stimulant of the flow of gastric juice. If the appetite is not good the digestion will be feeble, and then the addition of a little nutmeg will be found of benefit.

The French possession of Indo-China comprises the colony of Cochin-China, the protectorates of Cambodia, Annam, Tonkin and Laos, and the territory of Kwong-Chow-Wan leased from China—an area embracing approximately 310,000 square miles. The population is estimated at 18,000,000, of which about 35,000 are Europeans, the rest being natives, savage tribesmen, Chinese, Malays and Hindus. The principal city, as well as the principal port of entry, is Saigon, Cochin-China. There are now 1,378 miles of railroad operated in Indo-China.

According to a statement made recently by Major-Gen. Edward Wood, U.S.A., about 15,000 business and professional men in all parts of the country are taking advantage of the opportunities provided for them to undergo systematic courses of military training during the winter

months at the hands of Regular Army and National Guard officers. These men get their instruction at local armories, whenever floor space is available and generally in one or two evening instalments a week, averaging an hour or two each. Already some 10,000 men have announced their intention to attend the training camps which will be held at Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., and near Chattanooga, Tenn., in April and May, as well as the later training camps to be held during the summer months.

The cat came back! She was an unattractive gray animal and had hung around the home of Frederick Crowell, of New London, Conn. Everybody had got tired of her. Mr. Crowell is the American Express agent of the Central Vermont railroad here, and a manager was at last appealed to to take the cat on a personally conducted tour and lose her. He agreed. The cat was put in a bag and the messenger took it in the train as far as Brattleboro. Across the Massachusetts border, forty-eight miles from home, the bag was left, open, on the station platform. The abandoned puss was seen streaking it for the fields as the train pulled out. The other morning when Crowell opened the front door to get the milk bottle and the morning paper the cat sat on the steps washing her face. She was frayed out and frazzled and dirty after her long hike, but still game. Perseverance has conquered. Crowell has adopted her for life.

According to the Army and Navy Journal Great Britain is not the only foreign power to learn through the naval activities of the present war that the monitor, despised by our own navy, which invented and perfected it, is still a useful tool of offense and defense under the right conditions. Reports from the Danube state that the Austrian river monitors have proved of immense value in the operations against the Serbians, and succeeded in breaking down the blockade of the Danube which was set up by the British sailors under Rear Admiral Troubridge, who installed heavy naval guns on the banks near Belgrade, whence for a time they raked the river reaches for miles above and below their position. How the Austrians finally succeeded in neutralizing this control has never been made known, but they did so, according to the admissions of English correspondents, even before the victorious advance of the Austro-German armies upon northern Serbia. At one time Austria-Hungary had seven or eight monitors on the Danube—vessels of from 305 to 527 tons, armed with 4.7-inch guns and with speeds of from eight to thirteen knots. They were all protected by deck, turret and side armor, and in point of age ranged from the Maros and Leitha, built in 1871 and reconstructed in 1894, to two new ships which were not entirely completed when the war broke out. The enemy also had several gunboats; but the number of both these classes of vessels has been reduced. The claim that the modern battleship is an improved monitor is fallacious. It lacks the essential feature of the monitor, which is its low freeboard and underwater protection.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

State-wide prohibition went into effect at Little Rock, Ark., Jan. 1, and every indication points to its strict observance in this and other cities. All the saloons closed at the appointed hour and the owners were removing the fixtures. Under the law the sale, manufacture or giving away of any kind of malt, vinous or spirituous liquors is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for one year.

Oklahoma received a New Year's gift of 2,229 citizens, each of whom is worth about \$30,000, when Federal Judge Henry Hudson handed down a decision holding that all Osage Indians were full citizens of the United States and as such were entitled to all rights granted in the Fourteenth Amendment. The decision gives the members of the tribe complete control over their personal property, but does not affect their real estate holdings.

The greatest single lock in all the world is in operation on the "Soo" Canal. This lock has a length of 1,350 feet, with a width of 50 feet, a height of 50 feet and a lift of 20 feet. These dimensions far surpass those of any other lock in the world, the length of the biggest lock in the Kiel Canal being but 1,032 feet. Two of the largest lake freighters that plow these waters, or four small steamers, may be accommodated in the lock at one time. The lock is operated by means of electricity and requires but six minutes to be filled or emptied.

Lemon extract, which for years was used only as a flavoring in cakes and pastry, is being tried as a substitute for whisky and beer by some persons in Vevay, Ind., since the city voted out the saloons. According to the man who claims to have discovered the drink substitute, "50 cents' worth will bring that happy, don't-care feeling, and \$1 worth will result in a first-class jag." For some months there have been an unusual number of intoxication cases tried before Mayor Campbell. Courts of inquiry to learn where the intoxicants came from were without result. Finally, it was learned that where the grocery stores here formerly sold only a few bottles of extract in a week's time, dozens of bottles are now sold daily. Mayor Campbell has so far been unable to interfere with the lemon extract business.

There is probably no place in the world where geese are raised more extensively than in Poland. Warsaw is the great center for the trade in these birds, and it is the town of Dvinsk, near which the Russian and German armies have been fighting so furiously of late, that has largely supplied the Warsaw market. Dvinsk, too, is probably the only place in the world where geese are shod. The Polish farmer does not send his birds to market in coops and by train. That would be a considerable expense. He drives them on the highway, the flock often numbering several hundred. That they may walk to Warsaw without getting sore feet, he shoes them. They are first made to walk over a patch of road covered with warm tar, and then over another patch covered with sand. In this way the feet get a coat of tar and sand, and they make the journey without becoming footsore.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

She—Would you leave your home for me? **He**—I'd leave a baseball game in the ninth inning with the score a tie.

Head Waiter—What's he want? **Waiter**—Says he wants a little of everything. **Head Waiter**—Give him some hash.

Patience—And did he ask the all-important question last night? **Patrice**—Yes, he asked what size shoe father wore.

Grateful Patient—Doctor, how can I ever repay you for your kindness to me?" **Doctor**—Doesn't matter, old man. Check, money order or cash.

Mrs. Flanagan—I want a pair of shoes for my boy. **Salesman**—French kid, ma'am? **Mrs. Flanagan**—No, sir; Irish kid.

Dejected Suitor—If you intended to say "no" why did you let me propose? **Sweet Girl**—Why, how could I say "no" if you didn't?

Miss Angular—Do you think my age is beginning to tell on me? **Miss Plumleigh**—Yes, dear; but then you have no cause for worry. It doesn't begin to tell the whole truth.

Markley—No, I can't let you have a "V." Why don't you get Jenks to lend it to you? **Borroughs**—But he doesn't know me very well. **Markley**—That's why I suggested him.

A certain laborer once asked a country clergyman to write a letter for him to a duke, from whom he wished to obtain aid. "But you ought to go yourself and see His Grace," said the clergyman. "I would, sir," was the laborer's answer, "but you see I don't like to speak to the Duke. He may be too proud to listen to the likes of me. I can talk to you well enough, sir; there's nothing of the gentleman about you."

STRANGLED.

By Paul Braddon

"What's the matter up the street?"

"Man found dead sir."

"Wasn't murdered?"

"Guess not."

"Who was he?"

"Old Laforgé, sir, him as lived in the third house from the corner."

"Laforgé?"

"Yes, sir; what used to be rich and lost his money, and took to drinking and licked his wife—that's him."

"And he's been found dead?"

"Yes, sir, in his bed with his clothes on."

"Aha! I must go and see him."

"Please, sir; they won't let you; only policemen and detectives and such."

"I guess they'll let me in; I was an old friend of his."

The above conversation took place between myself and a lad of about fourteen one morning in one of the by-streets of this busy city of New York.

I was strolling along quietly, when I saw a crowd gathered in front of a house, and suspecting that something was wrong, questioned the boy as to what it might be.

Poor Laforgé! I had known him well, and before he took to drink he had been an able man.

I knew his history almost as well as I knew my own, and before I go on I might as well give an outline of it, as it will be of use in following the thread of my story, enabling the reader to better understand what follows.

Laforgé was a Frenchman and a designer by profession, who had lived in this country several years, and was well known.

For a time he appeared to be very happy, and I often visited him at his house, meeting there occasionally a countryman of his named Durand.

I do not know if I was particularly attracted to Laforgé, or if, rather, I thought, than all acquaintance with him.

I said nothing to Laforgé about it, of course, and so the thing went on.

After a while I lost track of the man and learned that he had given up to drink, lost his work, and was rapidly going from bad to worse.

I used to see Durand a good deal after that, and he seemed to prosper as Laforgé sank deeper into adversity.

Then I somehow learned the two men played cards a good deal, and that in some way or another the designer was always the loser.

Then a third party appeared upon the scene in the form of whom I had my suspicions.

He was really a runner for a gambling-house, though he pretended to be a commercial traveler.

His name was Andre, and upon several occasions he had been detected in swindling, though he always, with his cleverness, managed to escape arrest, throwing the blame upon some one else.

On the day of Laforgé's death, the morning that I learned he was dead, I visited a notorious gambling

den, in disguise, for the purpose of shadowing a man against whom I was working up a case.

To my astonishment I discovered the three Frenchmen playing cards, and for high stakes, too, Laforgé seeming to be the loser.

At last when Laforgé had lost all his money and was on the verge of madness from having drank so much, Andre proposed a new game.

To this proposition Laforgé objected most decidedly.

I saw Andre slyly fill up his half-emptied glass, and Durand began coaxing him to reconsider his decision.

Andre proposed that they should drink a glass of wine at all events, and to this request the poor dupe acceded.

After that he was perfectly quiet and tractable, and did everything they wanted him to do.

Andre again proposed that they have one more game. Laforgé said he had no money.

"Suppose we play for the lady?" said Andre. "If you win, you get five hundred dollars; if either of us win, we get the lady."

"I cannot stake my wife in this way," said Laforgé.

"Chut, man," said Andre, Durand having very little to say, "what harm if you do lose her? It will serve her right."

"Perhaps."

"To be sure. She has frowned on you of late; let her go, at least let her think you don't care for her, and see how soon she will come around."

"You think so?"

"Verily. There's nothing like contrariness in managing women. If they think you love them, they will vex your soul."

"True."

"Make them think otherwise, and they will fly to you, fall on their knees, worship you."

To this sophistry Laforgé answered not, and Durand said, simply:

"Shall we play?"

"Yes."

The game proceeded, and Andre won the lady, laughing at the result, and saying that it would be all right, that he would discipline her a little, give her a lecture, and then send her back to her husband better than ever.

I did not pay as much attention to this singular affair as I would have had I not been otherwise engaged, and when the Frenchmen left I did not follow them.

When I heard that Laforgé was dead, I attributed the fact to his bad habits, and had no doubt that on account of his domestic infelicities he had taken more deeply to drinking, and had died of delirium tremens.

I determined to view the remains, and so, making my way to the house, easily obtained admission upon declaring my name and occupation.

Upon entering the sleeping apartment a strange sight met my gaze.

The room was a dingy one, poorly furnished, foul smelling, and bearing the general look of dilapidation.

The walls were bare, and the window was covered by an old blanket, hung across it in lieu of a curtain.

On the dusty shelf stood a mug and a bottle with a nail stuck in the neck, while behind the bed was a battered washstand, with a cracked ewer standing upon it.

Upon the bed, half dressed, one leg half raised, lay the Frenchman, one hand upon his breast and the other thrown across a chair, his whole appearance indicating that he had fallen upon the bed in a drunken slumber.

I knew he was dead by the livid hue of his countenance and the distortion of his features.

Not being entirely satisfied with my first examination, I approached the bed for the purpose of viewing the body more closely.

A deep red line upon the throat had attracted my attention, and aroused an entirely new train of thought.

Extending clear around the neck was a deep red indelible mark, as if the blood had settled there, beneath the skin.

I knew only too well what that singular mark indicated.

The man had been strangled, choked to death, by a cord, or possibly by his own cravat.

The position of the collar and cravat set me to thinking, however.

I found by their crumpled appearance that it was to their agency that the man had owed his death, the cravat having been twisted until strangulation had ensued.

Having settled in my mind that the man had been murdered, the next question was to find the assassin.

I at once thought of the two Frenchmen, and determined to watch them.

The body was removed and prepared for burial, which would be done at the city's expense, provided no one claimed it.

I had it given out that the man had died of alcoholism, because I fancied that the murderers, whoever they were, knew nothing of the mark upon the throat, and would fancy that there were no means by which they could be detected.

It was not long before I ran across the two Frenchmen, and a Frenchwoman whom I recognized from her portrait as the wife of the murdered man.

They were both attentive to the lady, and I could not tell which was the guilty party.

That night, however, I met the two men alone, and they were having an angry discussion about something.

"How much will you take for her?" asked Andre.

"Two thousand dollars."

"Chut! That is all she has."

"I know that," said Durand.

"And after I have taken all the risk, got this co-pain out of the way, am I to have nothing?" asked Andre.

"Aha! Then he is the murderer," I said to myself.

"I ran the same risk that you did," said Durand.

"Perhaps they both had a hand in it," thought I.

"No, no; you did not," muttered Andre. "It was my hand that directed the fatal noose, mine that arranged everything so there would be no suspicions; I did the work, and I claim the reward."

"Bah, you only——" here I lost a word or so, owing to the noise of a passing cart, "you are too much of a coward to have——"

The speech was interrupted by Andre's suddenly springing upon the other and seizing him by the throat.

Then I saw the gleam of a dagger, and before I could

interfere it was buried beyond the guard in the neck of the man Durand.

The other dropped the knife and turned, without looking at the body of the murdered man, to seek safety in flight.

I was at his side in a moment, and, seizing him by the collar, pressed the muzzle of my revolver to his temple, telling him not to stir or I would kill him upon the spot.

He tried to escape, but firing a shot close to his ear in order to terrify him and bring assistance, at the same time I clapped a pair of handcuffs upon him and hurried him off.

Two policemen came running to the spot, and quickly explaining the situation I delivered my prisoner to them and went back to find the wounded man.

He was stone dead.

Andre was tried for the murder of Durand and admitted his guilt, setting up as his defense that the other had called him a coward and struck the first blow.

My testimony destroyed this defense, and at last the man confessed his guilt and was sentenced to be hanged.

He would say nothing about the Laforgue affair, except to deny that he had committed the murder, though he might be considered an accessory.

It was impossible to get any information out of him, whether he had any accomplices, or if he had done the deed himself.

He was as silent as the Sphinx, and neither threats nor offers of pardon could move him to say a word.

Madame Laforgue had fled, where it was not known, and the most thorough search failed to reveal her place of hiding.

At last, upon the gallows, Andre admitted that he had not actually strangled Laforgue, but had hired the hideous deed done, superintending all the arrangements, and watching the assassin do his work.

Laforgue had lately come into some money, quite unexpectedly, and it was to obtain this that he was to be put out of the way.

It was some time after the execution of Andre, whose real name was discovered to be Dubourg, that a Frenchman was reported to have been dangerously wounded in an up-town gambling saloon.

It was said that he was delirious at the hospital, and that he said strange things; among others, scraps of sentences relating to the Laforgue murder.

I went to the hospital at once, and saw him. He was asleep, but talked incessantly, and I soon gathered enough to convince me that he was the man whom Dubourg had hired to kill Laforgue.

When he became calm, I read to him a transcript of the things he had said in his frenzy. At first he denied all knowledge of the affair, but as he grew weaker, and saw that there was no chance of his living, he retracted the denial.

He confessed the whole affair, and said further that Madame Laforgue was a party to the plot, and that she had fled to Holland, between which country and our own there was no treaty of extradition.

He soon died, and so cheated the gallows, and that ending the affair, the wife of the murdered man never returning to this country.

NEWS OF THE DAY

If a new idea of a Sumneytown, Pa., farmer becomes a fact, the rabbit may be put into the food market. He has trained some of his heifers to scent and chase rabbits with as much success as dogs, and, indeed, cheaper.

Harold Eastman had a narrow escape from wolves near Rabey, Minn. Eastman had left the store to look over some timber about two miles from town. While going through the woods a pack of seventeen wolves were on his trail. He kept them at within a few feet and killed three of them with his rifle.

Farmers in the vicinity of New Caesarea, Ohio, have found a way to "kill" the local action news. The cinders of gallons of cider were buried in the garden. This is all, and the farmers have discovered that the running it through a gun in September the vinegar is extracted, leaving little but the pulp alcohol remaining. "It's just an awful kick," declared one farmer, who allowed his barrel of cider to sit in the yard. No water sun for two weeks before giving it the ocean sear or t's. Since this discovery others are filling their barrels with jugs of the generated juice to tide them over the winter months.

New York is the largest city in the world. London, by reason of less population by the war and because of gigantic error in estimating the population, must now admit the American metropolis is the bigger by about a quarter of a million people. The exact number of people in the County of London, according to the 1911 figures, is 4,521,358, whereas New York City in 1910 numbered 4,763,883. Counting in "Greater London," that is, London outside the county, the population of the erstwhile metropolis of the world is 7,271,358, where that of Greater New York, including the Westchester and New Jersey suburbs, was at the last census 7,383,871.

An ingenious instrument for smuggling was discovered at Rangoon, when a Chinaman named Oheng was arrested at about 7 o'clock in the morning as he stepped ashore from a steamer. The prisoner was carrying what appeared to be a tin of kerosene, but on examination of the tin a cunningly contrived smuggling outfit was discovered. The corner of the tin, where the opening to admit the oil was situated, was broken. One of a cube four inches square and the other part of the tin was used as a receptacle for contraband, the tin being made for sliding out. In this hidden receptacle the Chinaman was found fifty-five tolas of beinchi and three or four ounce bottles of cocaine.

Harvard has completed the military mobilization of its domestic resources and with the first of the year will begin the training of 1,100 students and professors as recruits of the United States army in the event of war. The students will have a new course in military science, taught by Capt. Constant Culler, 3d.

U.S. Inf., has been designated by the War Department to command and to give instruction to the military students. The regiment has already enlisted 910 men from the undergraduate body and the faculty, including two Chinamen, a Hindu, an Indian and a Russian, who are as enthusiastic as the Americans. The new organization will be known as the Harvard Regiment of Infantry.

Mr. H. H. Nourse, of Saturday Night, published in Mr. Henry Ford's home town, says of Mr. Ford, whom he has known for a long time: "It is, we believe, a fair estimate of the man to say that he is a mechanical genius of a sweet and kindly disposition with almost boundless ignorance on almost every subject of human knowledge outside of his mechanical specialties. He never had the advantage of an adequate education at school or college, and he has succeeded in reaching middle life with far less of the traits of self-education than many men of the same age with less opportunity. He would never win a prize in spelling, and what he says so frequently and so verbosely in the newspapers of his merits is what others say for him, and write for him, and in large measure think for him."

The plant for the manufacture of sulphuric acid at the Indian Head Proving Ground Powder Factory has been completed. With this in operation the plant will be able to produce sufficient sulphuric acid for the powder that is manufactured at the factory. This is quite an improvement in the facilities of the plant. It will not only reduce the cost of manufacturing powder, but will prevent delays in securing a supply of sulphuric acid, which has frequently resulted in the shutting down of the plant. It is impossible to store a large supply of sulphuric acid at Indian Head, and it has been necessary to transport it down the river at frequent intervals. Occasionally when the Potomac River is frozen up it has been impossible to reach Indian Head with beatboats of acid.

The gorilla and chimpanzee, which belong to the higher order of apes, have many points of resemblance to man, but there is one thing they cannot do—that is, twiddle their thumbs. In the gorilla the thumb is short and does not reach much beyond the bottom of the first joint of the fingers. It is very much restricted in its movements, and the animal can neither twiddle his thumbs nor turn them around so that the tips describe a circle. There are the same number of bones in the hand of a gorilla as in the hand of a man, but the thumbs of the monkey have no separate flexor or bending muscle. This is why a monkey always keeps the thumb on the same side as the fingers and never bends it around any object that may be grasped. In the gorilla the web between the fingers extends to the second joint, the fingers taper to the tips, and there is a callousity on the knuckles on which the animal rests when walking on all fours.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

SURVEY SHIP LEONIDAS COURT-MARTIAL.

Court-martial proceedings are expected to follow the escapade of fifteen or more sailors aboard the United States Survey-ship Leonidas on Christmas night, when Lieut. Holland was seized and locked in the ship's canteen for more than two hours while a huge refrigerator filled with food supplies was ripped from its fastenings and tossed overboard. Dissatisfaction on the part of the crew at the Christmas dinner served moved them, it is reported, to this action. Fifteen sailors are now held as prisoners and a rigid investigation has been begun. All have refused to talk, and there is doubt as to how many of the culprits are among the prisoners.

SIGNALING THE AEROPLANE.

The usefulness of the army aircraft for scouting depends largely upon the care with which messages can be sent back and forth between the scout in the air and his army headquarters, say the American Boy. Long rolls of cloth are laid out on the ground in strips, making various signs to give the aviator the information desired.

For instance, the canvas strips laid to make an immense "V" would mean "Observe the effect of our gun fire." The angle of the "V" would point in the direction indicated and, after noting the effect of the artillery, makes a written memorandum. Sailing back over his own lines, the message is dropped, wrapped in a gayly-colored ball with long streamers attached, so that it can more readily be found.

ZEPPELINS USE DROP SEARCHLIGHTS.

According to an item in the Hamburger Fremdenblatt one of the Zeppelins which raided London recently carried a new sort of searchlight. The reflector and electric bulb were carried suspended from a 1,000-foot insulated wire, so that the blinding light disturbed the aim of the anti-aircraft guns. Shrapnel is reported to have hit the searchlight after several minutes of bombardment and to have put it out of commission, but during the few minutes which it operated it proved its efficiency as a defense against the searchlights from the ground. One of the officers of the Zeppelin reported that in the glare of his searchlight he clearly saw the Woolwich arsenal struck by one of the bombs, followed by a heavy explosion in the plant.

HUGE ELECTRIC SIREN.

There was used in announcing the official opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition an electric siren which is said to be the largest in the world. Its blast can be heard for a distance of 10 miles, and it is driven by a three-phase, 220-volt, five-horse-power motor. The siren is to be in constant use at the exposition for announcing important events such as aeroplane flights, military drills, marine parades and the other similar functions.

An aerial mail service will be started as soon as Con-

gress appropriates the necessary money. The Postoffice Department is considering several routes, including one from Key West to Havana.

TO KEEP FLOWERS FRESH.

Roses, carnations and orchids have been found to keep three times as long if a small quantity of sugar be added to the water, writes Mabel H. Wharton, of Oakland, Cal., to Popular Mechanics. A small lump of starch has also been found beneficial. Other flowers begin to bleed as soon as they are cut, and the precious sap running out of the stem causes the cells to collapse immediately. To prevent this, the end of the stem must be quickly closed, and this is best done by searing in a flame or by placing directly in hot water.

The florists of California go so far as to boil the stems of the brilliant poinsettias or Christmas flowers, for which they are so famous. The stem is first stuck through a large sheet of paper to prevent the steam from rising directly into the flower and injuring it.

Carnations and chrysanthemums will keep almost twice as long if placed in fresh water daily and a small piece is clipped from the ends of the stems each time. While cutting this piece off, keep the stem under water so that no air bubbles are allowed to enter the stalk and thus retard the upward flow of water.

If large-headed flowers, such as chrysanthemums or peonies, are to be sent some distance, insure their arriving in good condition by wrapping each blossom separately in waxed paper.

DATE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Department of Agriculture states in a recent publication that the date palm, which a few years ago was merely a botanical curiosity in this country, "is now the basis of one of the great prospective fruit industries of the Southwest. Offshoots of practically every important Old World date variety have been imported, and there is now in the date gardens of this country a larger collection of date varieties than can be found in any one oasis of the Old World." Progress in the American industry includes the development of a method for the identification of varieties by their leaf characteristics, and means of ripening the fruit artificially in a favorable season. Importations of varieties have been made from Egypt, Algeria, Tunis, Morocco, Nubia and the oases of the Great Sahara, both by expeditions sent out especially for the purpose and through correspondents in date-growing countries. At present the department is devoting much attention to the problem of developing a rational system of fertilizing the soil for date culture. It has recently been found that in alkali soils, which take and thereby reduce the yield of this fruit, the addition of numerous small quantities of calcium sulphate keeps the soil in good condition and improves the crop in both quantity and quality.

TAKE NOTICE!

Itch Powder, Bombs and Cachoo cannot be sent by mail. Only orders for these goods amounting to one dollar will be accepted, as delivery will have to be made by express.

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It consists of three horse-shoes fastened together. Only a very clever person can take off the closed horse-shoe from the two linked horse-shoes. But it can be done in a moment when the secret is known. Price, by mail, 10c. each.

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Made of nicely colored wood 5½ inches long. The power is furnished by rubber bands. Ten discs of cardboard with each pistol. Price, 6c. each, postpaid.

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A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase.

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Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

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Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickelized brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied. Price, 10c. by mail.

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The greatest sensation, just from Paris. A most wonderful effect of a smashing, breaking, falling pane or glass. It will electrify everybody. When you come home, slam the door shut and at the same time throw the discs to the floor. Every pane of glass in the house will at once seem to have been shattered. Price, by mail, postpaid, 35c., a set of six plates.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



TRICK COIN HOLDER.

The coin holder is attached to a ring made so as to fit anyone's finger. The holder clasps tightly a 25c. piece. When the ring is

placed on the finger with the coin showing on the palm of the hand and offered in change it cannot be picked up. A nice way to tip people.

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